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A Path to the Beginning

The Major Redaction of the Gospel of Thomas and Syrian Christian Beginnings

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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The Major Redaction of the Gospel of Thomas and Syrian Christian Beginnings

Justin Marc Lasser

This dissertation recovers the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* and connects it specifically to the Syrian Orient. The proposal that the *Gospel of Thomas* is related to Syria is not new; this dissertation differs in that it contends that it is the latest material within the *Gospel of Thomas* that is to be connected to Syria. Beyond the Syrian connection, this work proposes that the Genesis 1-3 narrative serves as the context of the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. It is further argued that the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* represents the first distinctively Syrian Christian text on record. Finally, in the Appendix to this dissertation, a new stratification theory is proposed for the *Gospel of Thomas* according to chreia elaborative schemes detailed in the Greco-Roman rhetorical manuals referred to as the '*Progymnasmata*.'

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Preface

This dissertation marks the beginning of a twofold project: first, to offer historical contextual analysis and proposal for the *Gospel of Thomas*; and two, to offer a redaction-critical analysis and proposal for the composition of the *Gospel of Thomas* according to the chreia elaborative scheme outlined in the *Progymnasmata*. It is important to stress the ‘explorative’ nature of this dissertation: in its current state it is not meant to be a solution to the riddle of the *Gospel of Thomas*, but a contribution. In this sense the dissertation acts as a gesture towards a more complete project/book, but a gesture, nonetheless, that is both important and needed. It has long been maintained that the *Gospel of Thomas* is of a Syrian provenance, but this dissertation offers a more careful analysis of this proposal with the aid of redaction criticism, the later Thomasine trajectory (i.e. the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and the *Psalms of Thomas*), and the later Syrian Christian trajectory. The dissertation also incorporates the recent insights provided by the scholarship on ancient meals (symposia) in the ancient Greco-Roman world -- primarily from one of my advisors, Hal Taussig.

The importance of the *Gospel of Thomas* lies in its supplemental status. That is, the *Gospel of Thomas* broadens our view and understanding of the development of Christianity in the first two centuries of the Common Era. Not only does the *Gospel of Thomas* add to our reconstruction of the development of Christianity from early ‘Jesus Movements,’ it alters some assumed meta-narratives proposed by potent personalities such as Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Ephrem the Syrian. The *Gospel of Thomas* presents the unexpected and the novel. It carries the property of the ‘unexpected’ by its retroactive requirement that we adjust our narratives of Christian beginnings; it is ‘novel’ in that it offers *new* sayings attributed to Jesus. Though this dissertation does not enter into the debate about the historical authenticity of

these sayings (à la the 'historical Jesus') it does contribute to our understanding of how these sayings of Jesus were *used* by one particular community. This unique *use* of Jesus' sayings contributes substantially to our understanding of the development(s) of the disparate Jesus associations in the first and second centuries. Moreover, this dissertation succeeds positively in the further fragmentation of the narrative of Syrian Christian beginnings. I say 'further fragmentation' because it both agrees with the already-acknowledged complexity of the early Syrian Christian Orient and *adds* to this complexity. Yet, this supplement of complexity is not without 'positive' (i.e. constructive) contribution. It is already -- I propose -- an accomplishment to further challenge the meta-narrative of Syrian Christian beginnings as proposed by Eusebius of Caesarea and the *Doctrine of Addai*; and yet, it is a further accomplishment to offer a new trajectory within the multiple gamut of Syrian Christian beginnings.

Beyond the contribution to Syriac studies, this dissertation contributes much to current theories of Gospel formation and composition in the first two centuries of the Common Era. The work in the Appendix of this dissertation demonstrates a redaction schema according to the chreia elaborative for the *Gospel of Thomas*. While it is not intended to be the final solution, it does offer what is a beginning point for further investigation. This work with chreia elaboration (which was one of the primary meaning-making exercises in ancient Greek education) in addition to the meal/association settings common in the ancient world offers a new arena for the production of Gospels. This dissertation proposes that the *Gospel of Thomas* was itself formed (and composed) via a number of performative and perhaps educational elaborative renditions of early Jesus sayings material. With each subsequent communal performance (perhaps within an educational context) older material was elaborated and new

material added in the form of redactions. As this sayings tradition moved from one Jesus association to another it began to reflect the hermeneutical interests of the particular community offering the elaborations. The heart of this dissertation concerns the final (or major) redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* which occurred in a Jesus association in Syria associated with (and perhaps under the direction of) one Judas, called Didymos Thomas. It is further demonstrated that the later Thomasine texts elaborate these initial insights of the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* for later generations. In this manner, this dissertation proposes that the *Gospel of Thomas* offers a bridge from the Palestinian provenance of the earliest Jesus associations to the earliest Syrian Jesus associations.

In chapter one I set out to detail the state of Syrian Christian beginnings. I begin by introducing the traditional narrative involving Judas Thomas and one Addai/Thaddeus as recorded in the *Doctrine of Addai* and Eusebius of Caesarea's *History of the Church*. After reviewing the prospects of this tradition's historical authenticity, I turn to the primary task of the chapter, which is to introduce the major movements, textual traditions, sources, and personalities operating in the early Syrian Christian Orient. After this review of the religious complexity of Syria, I offer what I consider are the major characteristics of the Syrian Christian ethos shared by many of these disparate groups.

In chapter two I review previous stratification theories for the *Gospel of Thomas*. Initially, I had planned to offer my own stratification proposal for the *Gospel of Thomas* as a complete chapter, but the task became overly cumbersome for a dissertation. Because of the amount of material required for a thorough redaction-critical analysis of the *Gospel of Thomas*, my advisors suggested that I include the material as an Appendix to the dissertation rather than an extended chapter. It is openly acknowledged that the material outlined in the

Appendix is in its earliest of stages, and it should not be read, again, as a final solution to the compositional features of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Rather, it should be read as the first gesture toward a more complete redaction-critical analysis and theory for the *Gospel of Thomas*, which I plan to offer in the near future. However, this should not take away from the great importance of the work accomplished in the Appendix for this dissertation. It is presumed to have been read before the reader treads through chapter three. Without the Appendix, the conclusions reached by this dissertation will appear unsupported. In the Appendix I outline the development of the *Gospel of Thomas* by using principles of elaboration that were actually in use in the first two centuries of the Common Era.

The Appendix offers the first piece of my three-pronged method for uncovering the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. This first piece comprises the *literary* component. In chapter three I apply the other two pieces of the method: the *thematic* and the *historical*. After recovering the sayings traditions and elaborations that I propose make up the major redaction in the Appendix, I set out in chapter three to make the case that these recovered sayings share a common thematic matrix. It is proposed that the primary referential horizon for the major redactional material in the *Gospel of Thomas* is the performative exegesis of the 'Beginnings' narratives in Genesis 1-3. The latter third of chapter three accomplishes part of the *historical* criterion. It is there that I review the literary parallels in the later Thomas tradition (i.e. *Book of Thomas*, *Acts of Thomas*) and conclude that the hermeneutical interests of these texts are in line with the hermeneutical interests of the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. In chapter four I review a number of theories proposed for situating the *Gospel of Thomas* historically. After incorporating important insights from past scholarship, I offer my own proposal for the historical situation of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Chapter One

The State of Syrian Christian Beginnings

The primary proposal of this dissertation is that the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*¹ has much to say about Christian beginnings in Syria and that it represents the first distinctively Syrian Christian text on record. Thus there are two issues before us in these first two introductory chapters: first, in the present chapter, the state of Syrian Christian Origins in the first two centuries of the Common Era; in the second chapter, an investigation of the previous stratification theories of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

¹ See these important studies on the *Gospel of Thomas*: Akagi, T., *The literary development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, (Western Reserve University, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1966); Arthur, R.L., *The Gospel of Thomas and the Coptic New Testament*, (Graduate Theological Union, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1992); Asgeirsson, J.M., *Doublets and strata : Towards a rhetorical approach to the Gospel of Thomas*, (Claremont Graduate University, 1998); Blayone, T.J.B., *An examination of the origins and literary character of the Gospel of Thomas*, (University of St. Michael's College, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1990); Blomberg, C.L., *The tendencies of the tradition in the parables of the Gospel of Thomas*, (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1980); Brown, R.E., "The Gospel of Thomas and St. John's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 9, 1963, 155-177; Cameron, R., "The Gospel of Thomas and Christian origins," in: B. Pearson, ed., *The future of early Christianity*, 1991, 381-392; Davies, S.L., *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian wisdom*, (Seabury/Harper & Row, New York, 1983); Deane, E.B., *The relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the canonical gospels*, (S.M.U., Dallas, 1960); Dehandschutter, B., Recent Research on the Gospel of Thomas, in: F.v. Segbroeck; C.M. Tuckett; G. van Belle, and J. Verheyden, eds., *The four gospels*, Festschrift Frans Neirynck, Leuven University Press & Uitgeverij Peeters, Leuven, 1992, 2259-2262; Doresse, J., *The secret books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An introduction to the Gnostic Coptic manuscripts discovered at Chenoboskion*, (Viking/Hollis & Carter, New York/London, 1960); Fitzmyer, J.A., "The Oxyrhynchus logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel according to Thomas," *Theological Studies* 20, 1959, 505-560; Guillaumont, A.; Puech, H.C.; Quispel, G., and 'Abd al Masih, Y., *The Gospel according to Thomas: Coptic text established and translated*, (E.J. Brill/Collins/Harper, Leiden/London/New York, 1959); Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, (SCM Press; Trinity Press International, London; Philadelphia, 1990); McNarie, A.D., *The Gospel of St. Thomas: An exploration of role-playing and the creative process*, (University of Missouri-Columbia, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1989); Meyer, M., *The Gospel of Thomas: The hidden sayings of Jesus*, (Harper San Francisco, San Francisco, 1992); Patterson, S.J., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, (Polebridge Press, Sonoma, 1993); Piper, O.A., "The Gospel of Thomas," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 53, 1959, 18-24; and G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament," *Vigiliae Christianae*, No. 11 (1957), 189-207; "Some Remarks on the Gospel of Thomas," *New Testament Studies* No. 5 (1958/1959), 276-290; "L'Evangile selon Thomas et les Clementines," *Vigiliae Christianae* No. 12 (1958), 181-196; "The 'Gospel of Thomas' and the 'Gospel of the Hebrews,'" *JVTS* No. 12 (1966), 371-382.

A. Vööbus in his *magnum opus*, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, begins by acknowledging that the “sources have been reluctant in lifting the veil that covers the beginnings of Christianity”² in Syria. By ‘Syria’ I mean the Osrhoene province in northern Mesopotamia with its two glorious cities, Edessa³ and Nisibis, and the surrounding districts. Moreover, by ‘Syria’ I do not mean Antioch and its environs. Antioch, despite being in Syria, was not necessarily ‘Syrian’ in ethos, in the same manner that Alexandria, though in Egypt, was often referred to as ‘the great city *near* Egypt.’ The major provincial capitals of the Roman Empire were not necessarily representative of the indigenous populations in the surrounding regions, and Syria was no exception. It is my contention that the major redaction material of the *Gospel of Thomas* helps to lift the veil shrouding the first two centuries in Syria just a bit.⁴

The traditional story of Christianity’s arrival in the Osrhoene is recorded in the Syriac *Doctrine of Addai*.⁵ In this legend King Abgar of Edessa sent Hannan, the director of his kingdom’s archives, to Sabinus, Emperor Tiberius’ representative in the East, with important correspondence. While Hannan and his associates were traveling they heard of a famous teacher and healer, and so went to Jerusalem to meet him. This famous teacher, of course, was

² Vööbus, A., *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History and Culture in the Near East*, Vol. 1, The Origins of Asceticism and Early Monasticism in Persia (Louvain: Secrétariat Du Corpus SCO, 1958), 3.

³ See these important studies: Segal, J.B., *Edessa “The Blessed City.”* Oxford, 1970; A. Cameron. “The Mandyion and Byzantine Iconoclasm.” in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (1998), 33-54. E. v. of Dobschütz, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*. TU 18. Leipzig, 1899; H. J. W. Drijvers. *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*. (Leiden: Brill, 1980); E. Kirsten. “Edessa.” *RAC* 4 (1959): 552-97; K. E. McVey. “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol.” *DOP* 37 (1983): 91-121; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC - AD 357* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); M. Sommer. *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze. Palmyra – Edessa – Dura-Europos – Hatra. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Pompeius bis Diocletian* (Wiesbaden, 2005).

⁴ Cf. Ehlers, B., Kann das Thomasevangelium aus Edessa stammen?, *Novum Testamentum* 12, 3, 1970, 284-317. Klijn, A.F.J., Christianity in Edessa and the Gospel of Thomas: on Barbara Ehlers, Kann des Thomasevangelium aus Edessa stammen?, *Novum Testamentum* 14, 1, 1972, 70-77; Klijn, A.F.J., Das Thomasevangelium und das altsyrische Christentum, *Vigiliae Christianae* 15, 1961, 146-159. See chapter four for this proposal.

⁵ Phillips, G., ed. and trans., *The Doctrine of Addai* (London, 1876).

Jesus of Nazareth. Given Hannan's secretarial abilities he took it upon himself to record the teachings and deeds of Jesus there in Jerusalem for his king in Edessa. He also brought an icon of Jesus -- the greatest treasure of Syria, the *Mandylion* -- back with him. King Abgar was thoroughly impressed by this Jesus of Nazareth and decided to request Jesus' assistance with an incurable illness that he had been suffering from for some time. Hannan then returned to Jerusalem to deliver this letter to the teacher from Nazareth. Jesus, however, did not have the time to make the trek to King Abgar in Edessa, but he did promise to send one of his disciples to King Abgar after he ascended to his father in heaven. Suddenly a new character, who wields the authority of Jesus, interrupts the narrative. This new character is none other than 'Judas Thomas.' Judas appointed Addai, who was one of the 'seventy-two disciples,' to go to King Abgar to heal him. When he arrived he stayed with a certain Tobias, who was a Jew from Palestine.⁶ Fortunately, Addai suffered no failure to perform this miracle and King Abgar of Edessa was healed.

In response to these events, King Abgar followed the precepts that Addai preached by erecting churches, baptizing his citizens, encouraging Emperor Tiberius (suddenly a champion of Christians) to castigate the 'Jews' for crucifying Jesus, and tearing down the altars of the pagans. The tradition uses Addai as a means to establish what would later be considered good Christian order in the Patristic Age. Addai went about commissioning priests and deacons in accord with the later criteria of 'apostolic authority.' He consecrated the deacon Aggai as his successor and a certain Palut as a priest, thereby ensuring the apostolic

⁶ This is narrated as follows:

"After that Christ had ascended to heaven, Judas Thomas sent to Abgar, Addai the Apostle, who was one of the seventy-two Apostles. And when Addai came to the city of Edessa, he dwelt at the house of 16 Tobias, son of Tobias the Jew, who was of Palestine." (From G. Phillips' translation, London, 1876).

transmission of the Gospel from one priest to the next.⁷ It was eventually Palut, after Aggai's martyrdom, who established an ecclesiastical link with the 'Great Church' through Bishop Serapion of Antioch (191-212 C.E.)⁸

Eusebius of Caesarea recounts a similar story.⁹ In his version Thomas sends a man by the name of Thaddaeus, rather than Addai.¹⁰ He remarks that this Thaddaeus was one of the 'seventy disciples of Jesus.' Eusebius claims to have access to authentic correspondence between Jesus and Abgar from the 'Record Office at Edessa.'¹¹ He relates the part of the story involving Tobias, which is important in Syriac Christian beginnings, as follows:

After Jesus was taken up, Judas, also known as Thomas, sent him as an apostle of Thaddaeus, one of the Seventy, who came and stayed with Tobias, son of Tobias.... So [when King Abgar] summoned Tobias, with whom Thaddaeus

⁷ This part is narrated as follows:

"But neither Abgar the king, nor Addai the Apostle pressed any man by force to believe in Christ; because without the force of man, the force of the signs compelled many to believe in Him. And all this country of Mesopotamia, and all the regions round about it received his doctrine with love. But Aggai made the chains and headbands of the king, and Palut and Abshelama and Barsamya with the rest of the others their companions, adhered to Addai the Apostle, and he received them and made them partakers with him in the ministry; they read in the Old Testament and the New, and the Prophets, and the Acts of the Apostles, every day they meditated on them. He commanded them cautiously, "Let your bodies be pure, and let your persons be holy; as is right for men who stand before the altar of God; and be ye indeed far removed from false swearing, and from wicked murder, and from false testimony, which is mixed with adultery, and from sorcerers with respect to whom there are no mercies, and from divinations, and soothsaying, and necromancers, and from fates, and nativities, in which the erring Chaldees boast themselves; and from stars, and the signs of the Zodiac, in which the foolish are confident. And keep at a distance from you evil hypocrisy, and bribes, and gifts, by which the pure are condemned." (From G. Phillips' translation, London, 1876).

⁸ This part is narrated as follows:

"And because that by the breaking of his legs he died suddenly and quickly, he was not able to place the hand upon Palut. Palut himself went to Antioch, and received the hand of the priesthood from Serapion, Bishop of Antioch. Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, himself also received the hand from Zephyrinus, Bishop of the city of Rome, from the succession of the hand of the priesthood of Simon Cephas, which he received from our Lord, who was there Bishop of Rome twenty-five years, in the days of the Caesar, who reigned there thirteen years." (From G. Phillips' translation, London, 1876).

⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church From Christ to Constantine*, G.A. Williamson, trans., (London: Penguin Books, 1989, original, 1965).

¹⁰ "After His resurrection and ascent into heaven, Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, was moved by inspiration to send Thaddaeus, himself in the list of Christ's seventy disciples, to Edessa as a preacher and evangelist of the teaching about Christ." *The History of the Church*, I.13, 30-31.

¹¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church*, I.13, 31-33.

was staying, he said: 'I understand that a man with unusual powers has arrived and is staying in your house [as is working many cures in the name of Jesus.] Tobias answered: 'Yes, sir. A man from foreign parts has arrived and is living with me, and is performing many wonders.' Abgar replied: 'Bring him to me.' So Tobias went to Thaddaeus and said to him: "The Toparch Abgar has summoned me and told me to bring you to him so that you can cure him.' Thaddaeus answered: 'I will present myself, since the power of God has sent me to him.' The next day Tobias got up early and escorted Thaddaeus to Abgar.¹²

The *Doctrine of Addai* tradition was quickly dismissed by A. Vööbus as a "fabrication."¹³

Though I agree that there is little, if any, historical value in the document, it should not be considered a mere fabrication. Rather, it should be considered part of the creative meaning-making process associated with Christian imagination. It should be remembered that Christian Origins, in the Orthodox project, is the creative re-imagination of the past (which is usually lost) for the purposes of the present. For the Orthodox, this re-imagination of the past makes 'the past' into the present. This is especially important in regard to Apostolic Succession¹⁴ and the foundation of a Christian nation.¹⁵ The concern for rewriting the more nebulous and distant past of the Syrian Christian experiment alerts the reader to concerns that dominate in a later era. This concern, speaking broadly, was to make the model of

¹² Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church*, I.13, 32-33.

¹³ Vööbus, A., *Asceticism*, 3. According to E. Sachau, 'Addai' was a (Syriac) abbreviation for a Jewish name, 'Adonya.' Cf. E. Sachau, "Zur Ausbreitung des Christentums in Asien," *Abhandlungender preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse* (1919), 5. Cited in G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Jun., 1968), 86.

¹⁴ "The Orthodox preserve and enact the occasion of Jesus' sending-out (*apostellein*) of his followers to proclaim the good news to all who would listed. Indeed, for the Orthodox, this 'sending-out,' this mission of Christ, never ended... This formulation of a lineage of known and revered authoritative teachers, which could be publicly demonstrated (as in the lists of episcopal successions of local churches demonstrably in communion with other local churches, all of whom could point to a commonality of spiritual life and teachings), was important in establishing what the Orthodox meant by apostolic succession -- that is, the transmission of the sacred Tradition from Jesus to the apostles, and from the apostles to the bishops to the faithful in each local church." (J.M. Lasser, "Apostolic Succession," in: J.A. McGuckin, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, Vol. I (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 41-42.

¹⁵ For Eusebius of Caesarea it was important to establish a link between the ministry of Jesus, the continuation of this mission under Apostolic direction and inspiration, and the political State.

Apostolic Succession adopted in the West with Polycarp, Ignatius, and the Apostle John the same model for the Syrian Christian world. However, these very efforts are what suggest that the writer of the *Doctrine of Addai* legend was operating in a world that did not follow the Western model. What was important for the *Doctrine of Addai* was to establish their priority as a Christian nation by virtue of their having the *Mandylion* -- which demonstrated their Apostolic coherence with the Great Church¹⁶ in Constantinople.

What makes this narrative difficult, historically speaking, is Judas Thomas' imposition in the narrative -- he appears as nothing but a footnote. This artificial interruption suggests to me that the *Doctrine of Addai* is at least acknowledging a more arcane tradition: that of the Apostle Judas Didymos Thomas' activity in Syria. However, it appears that this Thomasine tradition may have grown suspect by the fourth and fifth centuries. Thus we have in later Syrian writings more of a passing acknowledgment of the Apostle Judas Thomas rather than any sustained praise for his supposed work in Syria. The *Acts of Thomas* represents the only memory of St. Thomas (whoever this figure was) in Syria today. The other Thomasine texts (*Gospel of Thomas* and *Book of Thomas*), though they espouse nearly the same beliefs, have been relegated, unfortunately, to the dustbin of heresy. According to the *Acts of Thomas*, it is Judas Thomas who was the Apostle to Syria, but in the *Doctrine of Addai* Thomas merely plays the role of intermediary between Jesus and Addai (Thaddeus). There seems to be a conscious effort in the *Doctrine of Addai* to elevate Addai's status over Thomas'. However, this move is not without serious historical problems. It seems that the later recorders of the Addai tradition were not merely responding to the then delinquent traditions associated with Judas Thomas, but the traditions of the origins of Manichaeism in Edessa.

¹⁶ By 'Great Church' I mean the Orthodox theological disposition that ascended to power in Eusebius' and Constantine's era.

To make matters more complex, it seems that the traditional evangelists had become pawns in the rhetorical battles between the Christians and the Manichaeans. We have in Mesopotamia two primary Apostles: Thomas¹⁷ and Addas (or Addai).¹⁸ What we don't have, however, is agreement on what these 'Apostles' preached. This same Addai appears as Addas in the Manichaean sources,¹⁹ and is responsible for, among other things, the evangelization of Syria. Both Thomas and Addas certainly got around in the ancient Orient. Depending on the source (i.e. the *Acta Archelai*,²⁰ Epiphanius' *Panarion*,²¹ Cyril of Jerusalem,²² Alexander of Lycopolis,²³ the Manichaean Turfan fragments,²⁴ or the Cologne Mani Codex²⁵) Thomas went to Syria, Egypt, Jerusalem, and/or India, while Addas too goes to the East, Scythia, Jerusalem, Syria, Yemen, and/or Egypt. Beyond these two figures, the Manichaean sources introduce another Apostle, named Hermas.²⁶ One need not be surprised that this Hermas went to Egypt, considering that Hermas was probably a metamorphosis of the great god

¹⁷ Cf. *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and the *Psalms of Thomas*.

¹⁸ Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church*, I.13.

¹⁹ See the chart in Forrester, F. and G. Stroumsa, "Mani's Disciple Thomas and the Psalms of Thomas," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (1980), 49.

²⁰ Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai*, ed. C.H. Beeson, (Leipzig: GCS, 1906).

²¹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. K. Holl, Vol. 3, (Leipzig: GCS, 1933).

²² Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 6.21 (PG 33, 593A).

²³ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Critique of the Doctrines of Manicheus: an Alexandrian Platonist against Dualism*, ed. P.W. Van der Horst and J. Mansfeld (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 52. See also, Alexander of Lycopolis, *Contra Manichaeos*, ed., A. Brinkmann (Leipzig, 1895).

²⁴ See Boyce, M., "A catalogue of the Iranian manuscripts in Manichean script in the German Turfan collection," Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Institut für Orientforschung, Veröffentlichung Nr. 45.) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960).

²⁵ See Cameron, R., *Cologne Mani Codex: Concerning the Origins of His Body*. A.J. Dewey, Texts and Translations (Society of Biblical Literature, 1979).

²⁶ Again see the impressive chart in Forrester, F. and G. Stroumsa, "Mani's Disciple Thomas and the Psalms of Thomas," 49.

Hermes -- the Greek name for the Egyptian god of wisdom and writing, Thoth.²⁷ The introduction of Hermas (i.e. Hermes) suggests that at least some of these ‘apostles’ were Manichaean-ized heroes of ages past. In my opinion, Hermas is too similar to Hermes to warrant a mere coincidence -- especially given the fact that Hermas goes to Egypt. F. Forrester and G. Stroumsa conclude that out “of the three, Addas is the best attested, and there can be little doubt as to his historical existence.”²⁸ It may be that Addas, however, who was certainly associated with Edessa, came from the Manichaean side (as he was presented as Mani’s close disciple) and perhaps Thomas derived from the Christian side. However, this is pure speculation. I consider Thomas an earlier tradition because of the ‘emerging’²⁹ first and second century date I assign to the *Gospel of Thomas* trajectory.³⁰ Moreover, because our first account of the Addai legend comes to us from Eusebius (though I am quite certain the tradition predates him, as he has clearly ‘heard’ about the tradition and did not invent it) in the fourth century and because Thomas is inserted *between* Jesus and Addai in the *Doctrine of Addai*, I consider the tradition *later* than the *Gospel of Thomas* tradition. Additionally, the *Gospel of Thomas* exhibits a far less sophisticated narrative, whereas the *Doctrine of Addai* tradition seems very interested in establishing Apostolic links, which was characteristic of the second century controversies over leadership. It is also possible that the *Doctrine of Addai* took the Manichaean missionary to Edessa and transformed him into the *Christian* Apostle to Edessa as

²⁷ Cf. Fowden, G., *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Ebeling, F., *The secret history of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from ancient to modern times* trans., D. Lorton (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 2007).

²⁸ Forrester, F. and G. Stroumsa, “Mani’s Disciple Thomas and the Psalms of Thomas,” 51.

²⁹ I use the term ‘emerging’ here because I believe the *Gospel of Thomas* was subjected to more than one redaction. I believe the tradition was born before the Synoptic Gospels but continued to develop in the second century. See chapter five for this argument.

³⁰ See chapter four.

a way of rewriting their history. This happens in the reverse in Manichaeism where the Thomas tradition is elaborated into a series of beautiful Manichaean Psalms, often referred to as the *Manichaean Psalms of Thomas*.³¹ Again, this is pure speculation -- but worth considering. Either the Manichaeans *adopted* these two apostles (i.e. Addai/Addas and Thomas) from the Christians, or later Christians *adopted* them from the Manichaeans. Given the early date I assign to *Thomas* (which will be discussed in chapter four), I am confident that Thomas is an originally Christian character, but in regard to Addas/Addai, I remain uncertain (though I am inclined to consider both Christian characters).³²

It is difficult to determine whether Addai and Thomas represented a novel way of rewriting their respective origins of Christianity and Manichaeism or a way of 'co-opting' their charisma. In the manner that modern prophets often claim to speak in accordance with the prophets of an earlier age, perhaps Mani and his followers believed that they did in fact speak *in accord with Thomas'* work in Syria. This, it seems, is what happened with the Manichaean adoption of Hermas/Hermes in Egypt and the Manichaean Psalms attributed to the Apostle Thomas. This adoption declares that both Hermes and Thomas proclaimed the same truth that Mani did. Whatever the case, what is clear, at least in my estimation, is that the variant traditions of the disciples of Jesus and the disciples of Mani in the Osroene region are not to be taken seriously as reliable historical data. The existence of both the Addai and Thomas traditions may suggest that these two figures represented two different groups in early Syrian Christianity, and that the *Doctrine of Addai* was intended to iron out the wrinkles

³¹ Allberry, C.R.C., ed., trans., *A Manichaean Psalm Book*, II (Stuttgart: 1938). Cf. Adam, A., *Die Psalmen des Thomas und das Perlenlied als Zeugnisse vorchristlicher Gnosis*, Beihefte zur ZNW 24 (Giessen, 1959).

³² I am inclined to think such because I am quite certain that Thomas and Hermas (Hermes) were *adopted* by the Manichaean tradition, which suggests to me that it is quite likely that the same thing happened in regard to Addas (Addai).

and join the two groups' history together. Whatever the case, it seems the Thomas tradition was certainly more potent: this is borne out by the frequency and popularity of the Thomasine sources (i.e. *Gospel of Thomas*, *Book of Thomas*, *Acts of Thomas*). Moreover, it is Thomas that mediates between Addai and Jesus, not the reverse.

Despite the fact that the *Doctrine of Addai* is admittedly a late document (fourth or fifth century?)³³ with little value for reconstructing Syrian Christian origins, some scholars have seized upon two pieces of evidence: that there was 1) a 'Jewish Christian' ethos and 2) that there was an ecclesiastical connection with the consecration of Palut as bishop of Edessa by Mar Addai/Thaddeus.³⁴ The proposed connection with Palestinian Judaism is articulated best by L. Barnard:

The details of the [*Doctrine of Addai*] story need not detain us as they are obviously legendary. Thus Abgar IX (179-186) was the first Christian King of Edessa and in the *Doctrine* the background of his time is read back into the time of Jesus. However there is reason to think that Addai was a historical figure and that, as recorded in the *Doctrine*, he was a Jew from Palestine. When he came to Edessa we are told that he lodged at the house of Tobias, the son of one Tobias, a Palestinian Jew. It is significant that although the Jews of Palestine appear in an unfavourable light as the crucifiers of Jesus, the Edessan Jews are represented as being friendly to Christianity. This appears to reflect a true historical reminiscence for Edessan Christianity, as it later developed, was strongly Jewish-Christian in outlook. Indeed Syrian Christianity came to reflect a particular facet of Judaism, viz. the asceticism of Jewish sectarianism. Thus in the writings of Aphraates (early fourth century), the first Syriac authority of any considerable weight, we find a view of the Church different from that prevailing in Greek-speaking Christendom.³⁵

³³R. Murray thinks that a fifth century date is most likely, whereas L. Barnard proposes an early fourth century date, i.e. 300 C.E. (R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 8-9. 4; L.W. Barnard, "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.," 162).

³⁴ See footnote 7 above.

³⁵ Barnard, L.W., "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.," 163.

I find it rather ironic that a text that is almost universally dismissed as ‘legendary’ has been used to contextualize much of Syrian Christian origins. Why, one must ask, does a brief remark in a historically dubious text about Addai/Thaddaeus’ lodging with a certain Tobias³⁶ in Edessa warrant such weight in the reconstruction of Christian origins in Syria? It is because scholars *assume* that the early Christian evangelists in Syria were Jewish that they seize upon the brief mention of Tobias’ Jewish background. Indeed, it is beyond dispute that Syrian Christian exegetical interests reflect influence of Rabbinical Jewish hermeneutical and exegetical style, but this is little reason to then suggest a thoroughly Jewish Christian character for the beginnings of Christianity in Syria. Moreover, the claim that “Syrian Christianity came to reflect a particular facet of Judaism, viz. the asceticism of Jewish sectarianism,”³⁷ far exceeds the evidence at hand. The suggestion that the Qumran community in the Judean desert influenced, characterized, and perhaps even precipitated Christianity in the Syrian Orient has no basis in demonstrable fact.³⁸ The extreme asceticism in later Syrian Christianity cannot be traced to the sectarians in Qumran. I must admit that I am surprised that this theory has remained dominant. Judaism, on the whole, has been resistant to asceticism, especially the sort espoused in Theodoret’s *History of the Monks of Syria*,³⁹ for example. Because a Jewish asceticism is expressed in Qumran, and because the earliest Syrian Christianity was *a priori* assumed to be Jewish in ethos and ascetic in orientation, then,

³⁶ Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church*, 1.13, 32-33; Phillips, G., ed. and trans., *The Doctrine of Addai* (London, 1876).

³⁷ Barnard, L.W., “The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.,” 163.

³⁸ This contrasts with the view proposed in J.C.L. Gibson, “From Qumran to Edessa or the Aramaic Speaking Church before and after 70 A.D.” in *The Annual of Leeds Oriental Society*, V, 1963-1966, Leiden 1966, 24-39.

³⁹ Theodoret of Cyrus, *The History of the Monks of Syria*, R.M. Price, trans., (Cistercian Publications, 2006).

it was thought there must have been a connection between the two groups. However, the chances of a group that was expressly interested in separating from the world and, one would assume, resistant to the teachings and beliefs of the Jesus Movements, having a direct influence on Christianity in Syria is very remote. By this standard, Marcion's asceticism, which was thoroughly anti-Jewish, may too have been influenced by the sectarians in Qumran. By the same rule, then, Tatian, who was purportedly a disciple of St. Justin the Martyr in Rome, was also influenced by the sentiments of the Qumran community. Clearly this methodology is overstepping the evidence. Asceticism, it should be noted, commands a wide array of impetuses and characteristics. Just because the asceticism of early Christian Syria shared a Semitic tongue, a Jewish background, and a number of themes⁴⁰ should not drive scholars toward the isolated community situated along the Dead Sea. Yes, the Qumran community did take vows of celibacy, observed dietary restrictions, and lived within a covenant -- but this is hardly a reason to suggest substantial influence over Syrian Christian asceticism.

The ancient Roman and Parthian/Persian worlds certainly had a number of ascetical philosophies operating in their respective domains that were much closer to Edessa than the sectarians along the Dead Sea or the Essenes in Palestine (apart from, perhaps, the Elkasites,⁴¹ but this is speculative at best). Moreover, the major redactional material in the *Gospel of Thomas*, which stands at the core of this dissertation,⁴² does not reflect any influence from the Essenes in Palestine and/or Qumran. The major personalities of early Syrian Christianity in the first two centuries (i.e. Tatian, Marcion, Bardaisan, Quq, and Judas

⁴⁰ This departs from A. Vööbus' theory, see especially, *Asceticism*, 23-27.

⁴¹ See below, under the rubric 'Baptismal groups.'

⁴² See chapter four.

Thomas) exhibit no substantial affinities with the Essenes in the Palestinian orbit. It is time to lay aside an unsubstantiated speculation from an age of scholarship clearly setting.

Beyond the question of Syrian Christian asceticism, the *Doctrine of Addai*, as mentioned above, has been used to support the Apostolic link with the great city of Antioch through Palut and Serapion. If this were a historically reliable tradition, one would expect to find it playing prominently in the early Syrian Christian recordings of their past. However, the (ca. sixth century) *Chronicle of Edessa* records nothing of Addai, Palut, Aggai, or Serapion. Rather, the *Chronicle of Edessa* begins as follows:

1. In the year 180 kings began to rule in Edessa.
2. In the year 266 Augustus Caesar was made emperor.
3. In the year 309 our Lord was born.
4. In the year 400 Abgar the king built a mausoleum for himself.
5. In the year 449 Marcion forsook the Catholic Church.
6. In the year 465, in the month Tammuz, on the eleventh day (i.e., July 11th, 154 A.D.), Bardesanes was born.⁴³

The event that follows recounts a flood in Edessa that destroyed a church belonging to the Christians,⁴⁴ but, again, there is no mention of King Abgar's conversion by Addai or Palut's ecclesiastical reign. However, it is not the absence of the traditional heroes of Syrian Christian origins that speaks volumes, but the presence of the later archetypes of Christian Heresy. After Jesus comes Marcion! And he is followed by none other than the controversial Christian philosopher Bardesanes (Bardaisan). One would expect that the chronicle, which was written by Christians, would gloss over these figures with the popular Orthodox tradition

⁴³ *The Chronicle of Edessa, The Journal of Sacred Literature*, New Series, vol. 5 (1864), 28-45.

⁴⁴ "But that very hour the waters broke down the western wall of the city, and entered the city, and overthrew the great and beautiful palace of our lord the king, and they carried away everything that was found before them, the desirable and beautiful edifices of the city, whatever was near the river on the south and on the north of it. And they destroyed the temple of the church of the Christians. And there were killed by that occurrence more than two thousand men, upon many of whom as they slept in the night the waters came suddenly, and they were drowned, and the city was filled with the sound of lamentation." *The Chronicle of Edessa*.

-- but it did not. This I think is quite suggestive. The chronicle accidentally admits that Marcion and Bardaisan played a more influential role than did Addai or Palut. The first Orthodox bishop to be mentioned in the chronicle is Conan (or: Qônâ):

In the year 624, Conan the bishop laid the foundations of the Church of Edessa;
and Sha'ad, the bishop who came after him, built and finished the structure.

W. Bauer proposed that it was this Bishop Conan that created the Addai, Palut, and Serapion tradition.⁴⁵ Though this is possible, there is no evidence to definitively determine whether this was the case or not. However, the early components of the *Chronicle of Edessa* do not make mention of any Jewish Christian figures, which may suggest that W. Bauer's thesis may be more plausible. Yet, I remain reluctant to attribute 'fabrications' to Bishop Conan when there is no definitive evidence. In this manner, Bauer's thesis is as unsubstantiated as Barnard's is. What I would like to suggest is a middle path: that Bishop Conan preserved and *elevated* the distant memories of past charismatic and ecclesiastical leaders (i.e. Addai and Palut) that were active in Edessa but not nearly as prominent as Bardaisan or Marcion. It is also possible that a connection was made between Antioch through Bishop Serapion by Addai and/or Palut. The *Aberkios Inscription* has been used by E. Kirsten and J. Segal to suggest that Christianity had made it as far as Nisibis in the East by the second century,⁴⁶ but the inscription comes from Hieropolis in modern Turkey. It reads as follows:

Faith was everywhere my guide and always offered me as food the fish from the fountain, the very great one, the pure one, which the Holy Virgin caught. And this (i.e. the fish) she (Faith) gave to the friends (Believers) to eat everywhere, giving an excellent wine mixed with water -- and bread as well.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Bauer, W., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (London, 1934), see chapter one.

⁴⁶ Kirsten, E., "Edessa," *RAC* 4, Column 569. Cf. J. Segal, *Edessa*, 69.

⁴⁷ Baldwin, A., "Symbolism on Greek Coins," *American Journal of Numismatics*, Vol. XLIX, (1915), 109.

I do not think the above inscription has anything to suggest about Syrian Christian beginnings: it concerns Asia Minor, not Syria.

J. Marquart, J. Segal, and now R. Murray, propose that “the Eessene story of the conversion of Abgar was *borrowed* by fourth-century Christians from their former Jewish brethren to the east. It was, perhaps, a garbled memory (though retaining not a few similarities) of the story about the first century royal conversions in Adiabene.”⁴⁸ Though Josephus’ account of the conversion of Adiabene’s royal court (King Izates and Queen Helene) to Judaism has much historical merit,⁴⁹ beyond there being a conversion of a royal family, there is nothing to suggest that the Addai legend was nothing but a variation on this story. It is a historical fact that the royal family of Edessa was Christian, so there would be little need to ‘borrow’ a story from a neighboring city about their conversion to a *different* religion. I find it more likely that the royal court at Edessa was more than capable of making their own founding story.

Perhaps Murray is partial to the possibility of Edessa’s founding myth coming from the story of the Jewish conversion of Adiabene because he believes that “Adiabene [rather than the Osrhoene] was probably the best-defined centre for the development of Christianity in the Syriac area...”⁵⁰ Murray’s move to emphasize the importance of the traditions in Nisibis in the neighboring Adiabene region over the greater attested Thomasine tradition is understandable when one considers that his book relies heavily upon Ephrem and Aphrahat to characterize Syrian Christianity as a whole. Though Ephrem and Aphrahat are to be recognized as major

⁴⁸ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, 8-9.

⁴⁹ Cf. Neusner, Jacob, “The Conversion of Adiabene to Judaism: A New Perspective,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Mar., 1964), 60-66.

⁵⁰ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 9.

players in later Syrian Christian theology and praxis, they were not, however, the most prominent in their own day, nor do they represent the ethos of the Thomasine and Marcionite traditions that were clearly present and popular *in the Osroene*. Ephrem operated from a marginal position. Though Murray's work is certainly masterful, it does leave us with a chasm between the origins of Christianity in Syria (which he agrees are indeterminate) and the later Orthodox theologians (Ephrem and Aphrahat). The Thomas tradition, which I will later propose is the earliest tradition, is given but a passing reference.⁵¹ For Murray, the Thomas tradition parallels certain developments in later Syrian theology, but he fails to note that the Thomas tradition may present the earliest form of Christianity in the Syrian Orient. Unfortunately for the *Gospel of Thomas*, it typically plays the part of 'parallel reference,' but it is rarely permitted to present its own case. The Thomas tradition, given its rather impressive attestation, should move beyond its footnote status. It is the wager of this dissertation that the *Gospel of Thomas* stands at the very beginnings of Christianity in the Syrian Orient, rather than as a mere paralleled attestation of Jewish Christian ascetic orientation (this will be proposed in detail in chapter four).

Murray argues that "It is hardly credible that these Christians [in Nisibis] should have received their faith from the melting-pot of Edessa; least of all Aphrahat, with his Persian name (Frahāt, modern Farhād), his isolated outlook, simple, 'backwoods' piety and stock of traditions still shared with early Judaism."⁵² According to J. Neusner the Judaism that Aphrahat was familiar with was not that of the Rabbinic schools in Babylon, but with the less

⁵¹ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 16.

⁵² Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 9.

intricate Judaism of the frontier Jews in Adiabene.⁵³ Murray also appeals to the prominence of the Christian 'School of Nisibis'⁵⁴ as evidence of Adiabene's place as the 'center' of Christianity in the Syrian Orient:

It [the School of Nisibis] is mentioned at the moment as another feature of the local Christianity which seems to reflect a Jewish model; Nisibis was almost the first place in the east to have a Jewish school. If this interpretation is correct, we have an entirely plausible context for the fact that the Christian Fathers frequently echo midrashic traditions which by the fourth century they could not have received directly from Jewish teachers.⁵⁵

However, Murray also notes that the Synagogue and the Church:

must have remained socially connected, especially in a milieu which was largely pagan or Zoroastrian; but by the fourth century they had quarreled irrevocably. Though Aphrahat is a courteous controversialist, he is preoccupied by the need for apologetics against the Jews, and Ephrem's third homily 'On the Faith' reveals the reason: he sees an imminent danger of Christians in Nisibis reverting to Judaism. Probably those most affected were those who had 'lapsed' in persecution and who, not wanting to deny faith in the true God, yielded to Jewish invitations to 'return' to the parent community which had the attraction of not being persecuted in the Persian Empire.⁵⁶

This theory, if correct, is instructive for the makeup of Adiabene. It suggests that Jews and Gentiles had converted to Christianity, not necessarily that specifically Jewish Christians evangelized non-Christian Jews or Gentiles -- which has been assumed in the past. I stress this point, because there is no indication that either Ephrem or Aphrahat were Jews; *but* there is an indication that some Christians were interested in either returning or converting to Judaism.⁵⁷ St. Ephrem's rhetoric against Jews and his desire to outline the boundaries

⁵³ Neusner, J., *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran*, Studia Post Biblica - Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 142-149.

⁵⁴ Vööbus, A., *History of the School of Nisibis*, (Louvaine, 1965) and A. Vööbus, *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis* (Stockholm, 1958).

⁵⁵ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 18.

⁵⁶ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 19.

⁵⁷ Cf. St. Ephrem, *Hymn de Fide*, E. Brock, ed., *CSCO*, 154-5.

separating Jews from Christians attests to a condition where such a boundary was rather difficult to discern. There are some who have used this evidence to argue that early Syriac Christianity was thoroughly *Jewish-Christian*, as opposed to ‘Gentile’ (or Pauline) Christian.⁵⁸

The great ‘Harp of Syria,’ St. Ephrem, is also instructive for the makeup of Christianity in the Osrhoene. It is when he fled to Edessa from Nisibis when the Romans lost the city that he lamented his status as a ‘Palutian’ (i.e. a follower of Bishop Palut)⁵⁹ rather than as a ‘Christian’⁶⁰ while acknowledging, through his rhetorical flourishes, the popularity of the Marcionites, the followers of Bardaisan, the Quqites, and the Manichaeans. I believe R. Murray is correct in seeing a connection between the Christian School of Nisibis and the Jewish School at Nisibis. One would assume that this is where Ephrem learned the midrashic (i.e., one of the Jewish exegetical and hermeneutical methods) technique and gained access to the Peshitta, the Syriac Old Testament.

While I do not think that the above evidence is sufficient to claim Nisibis and the Adiabene region as the ‘center’ of Syrian Christian beginnings, as opposed to Edessa and the Osrhoene, I do think Murray’s proposal highlights what may have been a significant difference between Nisibis and Edessa. It is important to note that when Ephrem arrived in Edessa he found a ‘Christianity’ rife with diversity and one that appeared ‘foreign’ to him. Perhaps Nisibis was much farther away from Edessa than previously thought. Edessa, the city of the Thomasine tradition, had no major Jewish academy, but it did have a great deal of

⁵⁸ Cf. Carleton, P., “Jewish-Christianity,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 731-775; Simon, M., “Problèmes du Judéo-Christianisme,” in *Aspects du judéo-christianisme: Colloque de Strasbourg*, April, 23-25, 19964 (Paris: University of France Press, 1965), 1-17; Strecker, G., “On the Problem of Jewish-Christianity,” Appendix 1 in W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 241-285.

⁵⁹ Here is further evidence that Bishop Palut was not ‘invented’ by Bishop Conan.

⁶⁰ St. Ephrem, *Hc.Haer.* 22.5.

diversity. Yet, we must not lean too strongly on the evidence of Ephrem and Aphrahat in Syria for the first two centuries of Syrian Christianity, as they are writing in the *fourth* century. This is the major weakness of Murray's argument: the fourth century is a far cry from the second century. So much could've happened and did happen in a period of two hundred years! What our investigation has shown thus far is that early Syriac Christianity delights in the unexpected: the Osrhoene and Adiabene regions are not the West, and we mustn't expect them to be. It is time that we turn to these diverse groups populating the early Syrian Christian landscape.

Groups in Christian Syria

*Jewish-Christianity?*⁶¹

Among the most prominent Christian groups that scholars attribute significant influence to in the Osrhoene region is the Jerusalem-based 'Aramean'⁶² group associated with James and the Ebionites.⁶³ Eusebius attributed the entire movement to one such 'Ebion' -- hence the name 'Ebionites.'⁶⁴ However, it is much more likely that the title derived from the Hebrew word for 'poor,' *ebyon*. If this is the case, and there is no reason to think it is not, then

⁶¹ See these important studies: Bull, R.J., Some hints of an independent Jewish-Christian tradition in the Gospel of Thomas, *Drew Gateway* 30, 1960, 168-173; Drijvers, H.J.W., "Edessa und das Jüdische Christentum," *Vigiliae Christianae* 24, 1, 1970, 4-33; Drijvers, H.J.W., "Facts and problems in early Syriac-speaking Christianity," *Second Century* 2, 1982, 157-175.

⁶² By 'Aramean' I mean a group of people that speak either Aramaic and/or Syriac.

⁶³ E. Schwartz argued that this entire tradition was created in the fourth century C.E. by later Christians who wanted to strengthen their pro-Jewish sentiments in Antioch. (Schwartz, E., *Unzeitgemässe Beobachtungen zu den Clementinen*, *Z.N.W.* 31, 1932, 151-199).

⁶⁴ Eusebius writes the following concerning the Ebionites:

"There were others whom the evil demon, unable to shake their devotion to the Christ of God, caught in a different trap and made his own. Ebionites they were appropriately named by the first Christians, in view of the poor and mean opinions they held about Christ. They regarded Him as a plain and ordinary, a man esteemed as righteous through growth of character and nothing more, the child of a normal union between a man and Mary; and they held that they must observe every detail of the Law -- by faith in Christ alone, and a life built upon that faith, they would never win salvation." Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church*, 3.26.

it is possible to connect this group with the 'poor in Jerusalem' that the Apostle Paul sought to support through the donations of his converts throughout the greater Roman world.⁶⁵ These Ebionites may also have been connected with the 'Judai-zing' groups that St. Paul felt were undermining him in Galatia.⁶⁶ What can be gleaned from this group exists in three reconstructed textual traditions preserved in Patristic quotations: the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, and the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*.⁶⁷

The earliest first-hand accounts come from Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Eusebius.⁶⁸ These Patristic writers were taken by the prospect that the *Gospel of Matthew* was originally written in either Hebrew or Aramaic. This language, they thought, brought them closer to their Lord's original teachings. It was also assumed the *Gospel of Matthew* was written for a Jewish-Christian audience which existed in Jerusalem, east of the River Jordan, and in Antioch. It was reported, moreover, that this community still spoke

⁶⁵Galatians 2:10. Consider G. Quispel's thoughts here:

"It is difficult to deny that some continuity does exist between the Clementine view of Jesus as the true prophet and the belief of Jerusalem Christianity that Christ was the prophet promised by Moses (*Acts* 3,22). And it has been proved that the Clementines reflect Jewish-Christian teaching when they consider James to be the primate of the apostles and remain faithful to the apostle's decree (*Acts* 15, 29) which elsewhere was spiritualised and thus nullified." G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1968), 83-84.

⁶⁶ Paul's Letter to the Galatians, especially chapters 1-3.

⁶⁷ For the *Gospel of the Hebrews* see: Cyril of Jerusalem, *Discourse on Mary Theotokos* 12a; Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 4 [on Isaiah 11:2]; Origen, *Commentary on John* 2.12.87 [on John 1:3]; Clement, *Stromateis* 2.9.45.5; 5.14.96.3; Jerome, *Commentary on Ephesians* 3 [on Ephesians 5:4]; Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 6 [on Ezekiel 18:7]; Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 2. For the *Gospel of the Nazoreans* see: Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 3; Jerome, *Adversus Pelagianos* 3.2; Variant to Matthew 4:5 in the "Zion Gospel" Edition; Variant to Matthew 5:22, *ibid.*; Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 1 [on Matthew 6:11]; Variant to Matthew 7:5 - or better to Matthew 7:21-23 - in the "Zion Gospel" Edition; Variant to Matthew 10:16, *ibid.*; Variant to Matthew 11:12, *ibid.*; Variant to Matthew 11:25, *ibid.*; Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 2 [on Matthew 12:13]; Variant to Matthew 12:40 in the "Zion Gospel" Edition; Variant to Matthew 15:5, *ibid.*; Variant to Matthew 16:2-3, *ibid.*; Variant to Matthew 16:17, *ibid.*; Jerome, *Adversus Pelagianos* 3.2; Variant to Matthew 18:22 in the "Zion Gospel" Edition; Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 15.14 [on Matthew 19:16-30]; Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 4 [on Matthew 23:35]; Eusebius, *Theophania* 22 [on Matthew 25:14-15]; Variant to Matthew 26:74 in the "Zion Gospel" Edition; Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 4 [on Matthew 27:16]; Jerome, *Epistula ad Hedebiam* 120.8; Variant to Matthew 27:65 in the "Zion Gospel" Edition; Eusebius, *Theophania* 4.12 [on Matthew 10:34-36]. For the Ebionites see Epiphanius in these sections of his *Panarion*: 30.13.1-8, 30.14.5, 30.16.4-5, and 30.22.4.

⁶⁸ Refer to the footnote above.

Hebrew or Aramaic. This kinship with Jesus' language and culture was the major interest for these Patristic writers. Scholars today are not all that different. Still the quest for *the* original Aramaic Gospel weighs heavily upon the hearts of Christian origins scholars, and for some, it remains a modern day quest for the Holy Grail.⁶⁹

It should be noted that none of the authors above ever *saw or found* any of these Hebrew or Aramaic Gospels. They *speak of* an Aramaic and/or Hebrew Gospel but provide *no evidence* that one ever existed beyond their desires to find one and the circulating rumors. The purported Hebrew language of these Gospels was intended to add to their antiquity, and provide a closer source for the teachings of Jesus. However, whatever the content of these Gospels, they were not persuasive enough to support their further propagation in the centuries that followed. It also seems that these Gospels were not original works but elaborations of existing Gospels, the *Gospel of Matthew* specifically; Epiphanius indicates this when he admits that "The Gospel which is called with them according to Matthew which is not complete but falsified and distorted, they call (it) the Hebrew Gospel..."⁷⁰ This suggests to me that these Patristic 'quotations' were actually remembered variations of earlier Jesus material (i.e. in the canonical Gospel tradition). These quotes were in Greek and in comparison with the other Greek Gospels. Clearly this 'Hebrew Gospel' was a play on the *Gospel of Matthew* and not necessarily an original work by these 'Jewish-Christians.' This is not to take away from the genuine creativity of this group. I intend only to note that the extant evidence suggests that they did not pen their own Gospel from scratch. It is the assumed

⁶⁹ One could also see parallels with the search for the 'source' (i.e. Q Gospel) of Jesus' sayings behind *Matthew* and *Luke*.

⁷⁰ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.2. Cf. Klijn, A.F.J. *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 28; Quispel, G., The Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of the Hebrews, *New Testament Studies* 12, 1966, 371-382; Quispel, G., Jewish-Christian gospel tradition, *Anglican Theological Review (Supplement)* 3, 1974, 112-116.

antiquity of the Hebrew language that precipitates the belief that these Jewish-Christian Gospels are older than what became the canonical Gospels. It is quite possible that these different 'Jewish-Christian' groups claimed to have Gospels in Hebrew and Aramaic as a way of positing their beliefs as earliest -- and it seems they were quite successful in doing so. It appears that the proto-Orthodox writers embraced this proposal, as have modern scholars. However, *these texts were elaborative, not formative*. The Jewish-Christian Gospels edit Gospels such as *Matthew*, but they did not write entire narratives. They, for the most part, used material that was already circulating in different contexts. We must be cautious not to assume that Aramaic means earlier. I am still under the impression that our earliest Gospel records are preserved in Greek. There exists no demonstrable extant evidence for a Gospel that was actually written in Hebrew or Aramaic.

A. Klijn argues that the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*:

which was quoted by Jerome under various names was written in Aramaic. On the other hand we have reasons to assume that Clement and Origen did not quote from an Aramaic Gospel or even from a Gospel which had been translated from that language. We, therefore, come to the conclusion that we are dealing with two Gospels, viz. one in Greek and one in Aramaic. This agrees both with Hegesippus who, according to Eusebius, used the Gospel according to the Hebrews and an Aramaic Gospel, and with Eusebius himself referred to the Gospel according to the Hebrews in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* and quoted from a Gospel in "Hebrew Characters" in his *Theophaneia*.⁷¹

Though this is entirely possible, there is, again, no concrete evidence for a Gospel that was actually written in Aramaic or Hebrew. What we have are second-hand accounts of a Gospel tradition that was once in Aramaic, but we don't have Hegessipus, for example, copying or translating from an Aramaic text into the Greek: what we have is Hegessipus writing in Greek while copying from Greek. This is not to say, however, that these Jewish-Christian groups in

⁷¹ Klijn, A.F.J., *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 29.

and around Jerusalem did not speak Aramaic -- I'm sure they did. Moreover, I am quite confident that they elaborated the Greek Gospel tradition according to their Aramaic ethos, and discussed these texts in Aramaic. I only question whether these elaborations were ever written down in Aramaic -- their very existence is too hypothetical. What bothers me is the pace at which some scholars just jump to assume that one such Aramaic Gospel existed. There was surely an Aramaic substratum to Jesus' teachings, but were they ever written down as such? I favor the primacy of the Greek form of these traditions in written form because that's all we have and because there are Greek word plays that only work in Greek. I think the burden of proof is on the other side. Moreover, the search for semiticisms, I think, is quite relative -- and I don't know what the exercise is meant to accomplish beyond some search for the pure 'original' Church or the 'historical Jesus.'

A. Klijn argues the contrary:

There is sufficient reason to assume that the Gospel in Aramaic was written by the Nazoreans, a Jewish-Christian sect whose members spoke Aramaic, according to Epiphanius. It is referred to as the Gospel in Hebrew letters or as the Gospel according to the Nazoreans which seems to demonstrate that the Gospel did not possess a special name... Since the Gospel was probably known to Hegesippus we would suggest a date of origin between 100 and 150.⁷²

I would counter by saying that there is indeed sufficient reason to assume an Aramaic speaking Christian community is responsible for elaborating the *Gospel of Matthew*, but there is not enough evidence to trust Epiphanius' and Hegesippus' sources in regards to a text actually written in Aramaic. Because the Jewish-Christian Gospels on record *respond* to the *Gospel of Matthew*, which was written in Greek, one would assume that those Jewish-Christians elaborating this tradition also read Greek. If, then, *Matthew* was written in Greek, elaborated in Greek, reached the Patristic writers in Greek, why are we trusting that these 'Jewish-

⁷² Klijn, A.F.J., *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 29-30.

Christian' elaborative Gospels were ever *written* in Hebrew? I think the reason is that we too have been taken by the romance of a Gospel in Jesus' own tongue. We think if we have it, then we have Jesus -- this is G. Quispel's *modus operandi*.⁷³ This is also why Syria has always been the refuge for scholars searching to rewrite Christian origins: it speaks a language related to Jesus' tongue and revolves in the greater Jewish orbit between Jerusalem and Babylon. Moreover, should not a self-referential description, such as the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, create cause for suspicion? Who addresses letters or Gospels to themselves? If there was once such a *Gospel of the Hebrews* or *Gospel of the Ebionites*, it was probably termed such by someone outside the group as an observer. The same could be said for the *Gospel of the Egyptians*: one would assume that this text was *used* by the Egyptians, and came to be attributed to them by outsiders.

The problem with much of the scholarship on so called 'Jewish-Christianity'⁷⁴ is that the category presumes a normative Judaism and a normative Christianity when no such thing existed in the first two centuries of the Common Era. Moreover, the search for Jewish-Christianity has been almost entirely performed from the Christian side, with the exception of B.L. Visotzky's brilliant article, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish: Christianities in Rabbinic Literature,"⁷⁵ which inaugurated an investigation of Jewish-Christianity from the

⁷³ See chapter two and G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament," *Vigiliae Christianae*, No. 11 (1957), 189-207; "Some Remarks on the Gospel of Thomas," *New Testament Studies* No. 5 (1958/1959), 276-290; "L'Evangile selon Thomas et les Clementines," *Vigiliae Christianae* No. 12 (1958), 181-196; "The 'Gospel of Thomas' and the 'Gospel of the Hebrews,'" *JVTS* No. 12 (1966), 371-382;

⁷⁴ E.g. J. Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish-Christianity* (London, 1964); Simon, M., "Reflexions sur le Judeo-Christianisme," in: *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Sects: Studies for Morton Smith at 60* (Leiden, 1975), 53-76; A. F. J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish-Christianity," *New Testament Studies* Vol 20, 419-431; B. Malina, "Jewish-Christianity: A Select Bibliography," *Australian Journal of Biblical Archeology* 6 (1973), 60-65.

⁷⁵ Visotzky, B.L., "Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish: Christianities in Rabbinic Literature," *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1989), 47-70.

Jewish side. As J. Taylor pointed out, for the term 'Jewish-Christianity' "to have any real meaning, the term must refer not only to ethnic Jews but those who, with their Gentile converts, upheld the praxis of Judaism."⁷⁶ Taylor also dutifully notes "The Jewish-Christians of the first century would not have considered themselves to be combining two religions, for they never accepted that Christianity was anything but the proper flowering of Judaism. The same is almost true for Paul. It was he who represented Gentiles as a wild olive shoot grafted on to the ancient trunk of Israel (Rom. 11:17-24)."⁷⁷

According to Epiphanius⁷⁸ the Ebionites and Nazoreans (Jewish-Christian groups) populated the regions east of the Jordan River. Epiphanius also connects these groups to the Jerusalem church that had fled Pella in ca. 66-70 C.E., also east of the River Jordan.⁷⁹

At most, it would be possible to say that some Jerusalem Christians went to Pella, and some members of this group remained in Pella and developed new ideas. However, Eusebius' history contains a separate and much more credible tradition from Hegesippus which appears to know of no flight to Pella, and has the ethnically Jewish church of Jerusalem continuing without interruption until the Bar Kochba war. Eusebius takes some pains to provide the troubled history of this group, with bishops that were "Hebrews in origin, who had received the knowledge of Christ with all sincerity" (Hist. Eccles. 4,5). Never does Eusebius imply that the church, though Jewish, was sectarian. Its demise was prompted by two civil wars in which the Christians' probable pacifism and associations with Gentiles can hardly have endeared them to the citizens of Jerusalem as a whole. During the second revolt they were persecuted by Bar Kochba (Hist. Eccles. 4,8) and eventually expelled by Hadrian like all other ethnic Jews (Hist. Eccles. 4,6, cf. Tertullian, Adv. Jud. 13).⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Taylor, J.E., "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1990), 313-334; 314.

⁷⁷ Taylor, J.E., "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity," 315.

⁷⁸ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29,7,7-8; 30,2,7.

⁷⁹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29,7,7-8; 30,2,7; *De Mens. et Pond.* 15. See also Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 3,5,3. S. Brandon considers the Pella tradition completely dubious. Cf. Brandon, S.G.F., *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London, 1957), 168; Brandon, S.G.F., *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester, 1967), 208.

⁸⁰ Taylor, J.E., "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity," 315.

We don't know, however, whether these Christians from Jerusalem maintained Jewish ritual identity markers. Moreover, we cannot assume that all Christians in Jerusalem were ethnically Jewish. J. Taylor echoes this thought writing: "though the origins of such churches might have been Jewish ethnically or by conversion, this tells us nothing at all about the role of Jewish praxis in these communities. Not all Christian Jews belonged to the circumcision party, even in the church of Jerusalem."⁸¹ Jewish elements and praxis does not demand that a text is then to be considered Jewish-Christian. Christianity derives *from Judaism*, so one should expect to find a number of parallels. Moreover, we don't know the ethnic makeup of the Jewish-Christians. The issue was less about ethnic makeup than about Jewish *praxis*.⁸² Jewish elements are not enough to imply Jewish-Christianity.

According to Eusebius there were two Ebionite groups operating in the second century:

They [the Ebionites] regarded Him [Jesus] as a plain and ordinary, a man esteemed as righteous through growth of character and nothing more, the child of a normal union between a man and Mary; and they held that they must observe every detail of the Law -- by faith in Christ alone, and a life built upon that faith, they would never win salvation. A second group went by the same name, but escaped the outrageous absurdity of the first. They did not deny that the Lord was born of a virgin and the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless shared their refusal to acknowledge His pre-existence as God the Word and Wisdom. Thus the impious doctrine of others was their undoing also, especially as they placed equal emphasis on the outward observance of the Law; and using only the 'Gospel of the Hebrews,' they treated the rest with scant respect. Like the others, they observed the Sabbath and the whole Jewish system; yet on the Lord's Day they celebrated rites similar our own in memory of the Saviour's resurrection.⁸³

A. Klijn concludes his survey of the sources for Jewish-Christianity as follows:

⁸¹ Taylor, J.E., "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity," 317.

⁸² Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3,11,7; Origen, in *Ep. ad Rom.* 3,11; Ambrose, *De Fide*, 5,8,105; Rufinus, *Expos. symb.* 37; Alexander Minorita, *Expos. in Apoc.* 2,2,2; Tertullian, *de Praescr.* 30,3-5,11; Methodius, *Symp.* 8,10.

⁸³ Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church From Christ to Constantine*, G.A. Williamson, trans., 3.26, p. 91.

Our conclusion is that from the various references in Christian authors three Jewish-Christian Gospels can be traced. They belong to three individual Jewish-Christian circles. One group lived East of the river Jordan and may be related to those responsible for traditions present in the Pseudo-Clementines. A second was used by Jewish-Christians living in the neighbourhood of Beroia who were commonly called Nazoreans. The third was used by Egyptian Christians of Jewish descent.⁸⁴

I think Klijn is on the right track here because his theory makes sense of the diversity expressed by the various Jewish-Christian groups. We know that a group of Jewish-Christians fled to Pella⁸⁵ and that another group east of the River Jordan⁸⁶ and that there was a substantial Jewish-Christian group in Alexandria Egypt.⁸⁷

Whatever the merits of my suspicions of the existence of actual Aramaic Gospels, what concerns us most is the theological content of the writing and its possible relationship to the Osrhoene region in Syria. Jesus' life in the *Gospel of the Nazoreans* and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* has a narrative and it appears to follow the Synoptic Gospel tradition: Jesus is baptized, transfigured, and resurrected -- all of which is entirely lacking in the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁸⁸ Jesus, in this tradition, is a *prophet* inspired by Sophia; whereas in the *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus is

⁸⁴ Klijn, A.F.J., *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 30. Cf. Amersfoort, J. van, *Het Evangelie van Thomas en de Pseudo-Clementinen: Een studie van de woorden van Jezus in het Evangelie van Thomas en hun parallellen in de evangeliecitaten in de Pseudo-Clementijnse Homiliae en Recognitiones*, Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, 1984. J. Taylor writes the following concerning the success of the Aramaic-speaking church:

"It is important to recognise the widespread success of the mission from the Aramaic-speaking Jewish church in the first century. The fact that the Aramaic-derived word 'Nazoraean' and its cognates, rather than the Greek-derived word 'Christian' became the normative terms for believers in Christ in Persia, Arabia, Armenia, Syria and Palestine, gives us some clue to the success of early missions from the Jewish Aramaic-speaking parts of the Church." (J. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity," 316.

⁸⁵ Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, 3.5.3.

⁸⁶ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 28-30.

⁸⁷ In Epiphanius' *Panairon* chapter 29 there are four centers of Jewish-Christianity listed: Pella, Beroea in Coele-Syria, the Decapolis, and Kokhaba.

⁸⁸ This conclusion stands in stark contrast to G. Quispel. Cf. Quispel, G., The Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of the Hebrews, *New Testament Studies* 12, 1966, 371-382; Quispel, G., Jewish-Christian gospel tradition, *Anglican Theological Review (Supplement)* 3, 1974, 112-116.

inspired by Sophia but does not speak in the oracular style that a prophet does. He speaks, rather, as a sage. In the *Gospel of the Ebionites* we learn that Jesus did not eat meat nor did he play the part of a prophet or messenger of Sophia.⁸⁹ It also should be noted that St. James plays a much more prominent role.

From these sources we can deduce that they endorsed the continued practice of circumcision, Sabbath observance, and traditional Jewish dietary restrictions. They considered Jesus to be a 'righteous man' (or archangel) *adopted* by God at his baptism in order to serve as the perfect and final sacrifice for Israel's sins. Jesus, for these groups identified by

A. Klijn, set out to end ritual sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple:

And on this account they [the Ebionites] say that Jesus was begotten of the seed of a man, and was chosen; and so by the choice of God he was called the Son of God from the Christ that came into him from above in the likeness of a dove. And they deny that he was begotten of God the Father, but say that he was created as one of the archangels, yet greater, and that he is Lord of the angels and of all things made by the Almighty, and that he came and taught, as the Gospel (so called) current among them contains, that, 'I came to destroy the sacrifices, and if ye cease not from sacrificing, the wrath of God will not cease from you.'⁹⁰

Though the Ebionites purportedly rejected Jesus' virgin birth,⁹¹ they did consider him "as one of the archangels." They also rejected Paul's message.⁹² Interestingly, in the dialogue complex in *Thomas* 13 we find Peter comparing Jesus to a 'righteous angel,' but Jesus rejects this proposal (by passing over it).

⁸⁹ Cf. Klijn, A.F.J., *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 41. B. Rehm also admits some influence by the Ebionites in the Pseudo-Clementine corpus, Cf. Rehm, B., "Zur Entstehung der pseudoclementinischen Schriften," *Z.N. W.* 37 (1938), 77-184.

⁹⁰ Klijn, A.F.J., *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 39-40.

⁹¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4,33,4; 5,1,3.

⁹² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1,26,2; 3,11,7.

Beyond the redacted canonical Gospels discussed above there is another set of literature that has been attributed to Ebionite circles, that is, the Pseudo-Clementine corpus.⁹³ We have, first, the *Recognitions*, which survive only in Rufinus' Latin translation; second, a set of twenty *Homilies* which were discovered in 1853; third, a possible underlying story, the *Kerygma Petrou*; fourth, a series of extracts from the *Homily* tradition. The *Homilies* and *Recognitions* read almost verbatim in many places, which suggests that both are variations on an earlier core tradition. The Pseudo-Clementine tradition details a number of legendary events between James, Peter, Simon Magus, and a number of other figures. This tale serves primarily as a dogmatic treatise, which is clearly associated with a group similar to the Ebionites. The Pseudo-Clementine literature lauds the position of James as the Bishop of all bishops and stands in contrast to the 'Pauline' form of Christianity. Whether the Ebionites were responsible for the tradition remains indeterminate. The Pseudo-Clementine literature first appears in historical record in Origen of Alexandria's *Philokalia*, which was collected and published by St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Basil of Caesarea around 360 C.E. However, a study by A. Robinson has challenged whether this occurrence in Origen's *Philokalia* is to be trusted. He proposed, rather, that it is probably a later interpolation.⁹⁴ The first undisputed appearance in historical record, then, is in Eusebius' *Church History* 3.38 in the fourth century. It is strange, then that some scholars have privileged this text as the major contextualizing apparatus for early Syrian Christianity when it is rather late, clearly legendary in character, and not corroborated in earliest tradition.

⁹³ See Jean D., *Théologie du Juïéo-Christianisme* (Tournai, 1958) for an immensely important study on 'Jewish-Christianity.'

⁹⁴ Robinson, A., *The Philokalia of Origen*, (MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2005). See the chapter on 'The Clementine Extract.'

G. Quispel has led the most recent charge in presenting the Pseudo-Clementine literature and Jewish-Christian Gospel tradition as the primary context for understanding the character and ethos of the first Christians in Syria as thoroughly 'Jewish-Christian.' He openly declares, I think somewhat correctly, that, "it clearly is absurd to deny all links between the Clementines and historical Judaism, of which Jewish-Christianity is a part."⁹⁵ My hesitancy in ascribing to many of Quispel's theories often derives from his tendency to delight in overstatement. Disagreement need not imply 'absurdity.' Beyond this initial declaration, his major piece of evidence for a 'Jewish-Christian' ethos for Syrian Christianity is what he sees as parallels between Jewish concepts of God and the Syrian Christian conceptions of God. Consider his remark in this regard: "It is stated in these [Syrian Christian] writings that God has a form. This clearly is an expression of the concrete Jewish concept of God as opposed to the abstract concept of so many Greeks. The same belief is found in esoteric Judaism."⁹⁶ Part of the problem with Quispel's methodology derives from his use of artificial and oversimplified categories, such as 'Jewish vs. Greek.' Though some Greeks had 'abstract' notions of God (as if that were bad), many did not. It is unfair to characterize the Hellenistic theological project with such a statement. Abstractness should not be interpreted pejoratively: these 'abstract' conceptions of God were far from ethereal in the Hellenistic world. Likewise, it is too much of an overstatement to declare that all Jews maintained that God had a form. Yes, some of the mystical writings do speak of God as if God had a form (e.g. the 'Son of Man' in *Daniel*), but there were also many that proclaimed the ineffability and formlessness of God. Moreover, the Greeks, though often speaking of God in

⁹⁵ G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Jun., 1968), 83.

⁹⁶ G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," 83.

abstract terms (e.g. the 'Good') still 'met' their God(s) in concrete form in temples. This first piece of evidence provided by G. Quispel is far too simplified and overstated to be used as any sort of criterion for characterizing Christianity in the Syrian Orient as primarily 'Jewish-Christian.'

G. Quispel's second piece of evidence for a 'Jewish-Christian' character of Syrian Christianity runs as follows:

A second indication that Edessa owed its Christianity to Palestine is the name Nazorees. The Syrian, Aramaic Christians did not call themselves Christians, but Nazorees, *naṣ'ērājā*. We remember that the name Christian was an Antiochene invention (*Acts* 11, 26): this argues against an Antiochene origin of Edessene Christianity. On the other hand we know that the Palestinian Christians were called Nazorees (*Acts* 24, 5). This was also the name of the later Jewish Christians in Beroea (Aleppo); their Aramaic Gospel is called "the Gospel of the Nazorees." St. Jerome found these Christians in Aleppo in the fourth century; but they can have lived there long before. Again, these old observations are confirmed by a recent discovery.⁹⁷

This argument rests on the notion that Christians in Edessa referred to themselves as 'Nazorees.' The problem here is that this is rarely (if ever) attested in Edessa specifically. G. Quispel uses the inscription of Kartir as evidence:

The doctrines of Ahriman and of the demons were banned from the empire and were destroyed (?) and Jews, Shamans, Brahmans, Nazorees, Christians, Maktaks were crushed in the [Sassanid] Empire.⁹⁸

G. Quispel argues that, "This shows us that towards the end of the third century there were both Christians and Nazorees in the Sassanid Empire." And from this small piece of evidence he declares that, "The Christians were the Greek speaking Gentile Christians from Antioch, whom Shapur had made captive when he conquered Antioch and had transplanted to safe regions of his Empire: there they continued to live, at first under their bishop Demetrianus,

⁹⁷ G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," 87.

⁹⁸ Quoted in G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," 87.

and had freedom of religion.” Though this is certainly possible, it is far from certain. Moreover, he declares that, “The Nazorees can be both the Jewish Christians in the Persian Empire and the indigenous Christians of Aramaic tongue.”⁹⁹ However, this does not demand that they were Christians concerned with Jewish ritual identity markers -- though it is certainly a possibility. The fact that James is referred to in the *Gospel of Thomas* is used as further evidence. But the problem with this appeal is that the *Gospel of Thomas* parodies James’ leadership -- it does *not* encourage it (see chapter two).

What then are we to make of the purported Jewish-Christian connection between Jerusalem and the Osrhoene? I think R. Murray put it best: “[I]t hardly remains credible that Syriac Christianity as we know it in the fourth century should have developed from a direct apostolic mission from Jerusalem to Edessa.”¹⁰⁰ Consider also A. Golitzin’s remarks on this front in regards to fourth century Christian mysticism:

The evidence does not support the assertion that these later writers stem -- somehow -- directly from the Qumran sectarians. The problem lies exactly in the “somehow.” No visible line of continuity connects them, at least as discrete communities. Yet to argue that there is nothing whatever that links them, other than a purely fortuitous aggregate of similar preoccupations with the inheritance of biblical Israel, would seem to me to be equally abusive... We meet a “cluster” of themes in both sets of literature, and this cluster is, moreover, clearly not a simple aggregation of disparate elements, but a related and relatively unified set of themes: the Glory of God, the liturgy of the angels, and Adamic splendor, set in the imagery and theology of the Temple, promising fellowship with heaven and the recovery of Paradise, not just as an eschatological but also as a present possibility, and all of this in the context of a consecrated celibacy based, if Guillaumont was correct (and I have not yet run across an argument refuting him), on the sacerdotal holiness code of Leviticus.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ G. Quispel, “The Discussion of Judaic Christianity,” 88.

¹⁰⁰ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Golitzin, A., *Recovering the “Glory of Adam”: “Divine Light” Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetical Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia*, A paper given at the International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls, St. Andrews, Scotland, on 28 June, 2001.

I welcome A. Golitzin's caution. Indeed, the Syrian Orient was a crucible for ideas, and it is quite clear that these disparate movements in Mesopotamia shared a matrix of beliefs, such as a concern for Adam's previous glory and an interest in asceticism. But I think it can be stated definitively that there is no demonstrable evidence literally connecting Edessa and Osrhoene to the Jewish-Christian Jerusalem mission headed by St. James, the brother of Jesus. The traditions of St. James were known in the Thomasine literature, but 'knowledge of' does not mean 'adherence to' -- especially when James' position in the Church was parodied in *Thomas* 12-13 (see chapter two). The problem revolves around the term 'Jewish-Christian' -- a term that I suggest should be used only for those Christians that actively pursued the continued adherence to the Jewish Law (i.e. circumcision, Sabbath observance, and dietary restrictions). It is not that there were no Christians of Jewish heritage in Syria; indeed I am sure there were many. The issue I have is the equation between Aramaean and/or Jewish heritage and Jewish religious identity markers. Who is to say that Paul's 'Judaism' was any less 'Jewish' than another's? Or Peter's? Or James'? This is the task of the theologian, not the historian. Because Jesus eliminates the Jerusalem sacrificial system in some of the 'Jewish-Christian' sources, does this then suggest that the Ebionites were no longer Jewish-Christians? I don't think so. Or what of the differences between Pharisees and Sadducees in the first century: which deserves the mantle of Orthodox Judaism? By 'Jewish-Christian' I understand a substantial concern for Jewish identity markers and practices: dietary restrictions, Sabbath observance, circumcision, fasting, and traditional prayers, among others. It is important to note that the *Gospel of Thomas* rejects all of these.

Scholarship, I think, has gradually associated Aramaic/Syriac language and culture and Jewish exegetical styles with 'Jewish-Christianity.' Though Aphrahat and Ephrem

exhibit significant influence from Jewish exegesis and hermeneutics one would be hard pressed to declare them 'Jewish-Christian' -- especially considering that they spend much time distinguishing themselves from Jews. E. Yamauchi made a similar point regarding the origins of the Mandaean movement, which some have connected with Judaism and 'Jewish-Christianity.'¹⁰² If the Mandaeans, whose mythology is thoroughly anti-Jewish, are to be considered a former Jewish movement, then one could, according to E. Yamauchi, conclude that Islam too was originally a Jewish movement. The important rule to be established is that a shared mythological matrix or story-world need not demand a direct derivation from an earlier community. In this sense, Islamic sources can use the Jewish story-world without necessarily being considered Jewish-Muslims. Likewise, Ephrem and Aphrahat's use of Jewish literary features need not demand that we consider them inheritors of 'Jewish-Christian' tradition. Rather, it seems more appropriate to assume that they were both influenced by various forms of Judaism. This is the only way to square their, at times, harsh rhetoric against Jews, while also acknowledging their use of Jewish literary and exegetical technique.

Moreover, it is time that we cast a skeptical eye on the traditions in the *Doctrine of Addai*. L. Barnard, when commenting on Addai as a historical character and his Palestinian Jewish derivation, suggested that the tradition "appears to reflect a true historical reminiscence for Edessan Christianity, as it later developed, was strongly Jewish-Christian in outlook. Indeed Syrian Christianity came to reflect a particular facet of Judaism, viz. the asceticism of Jewish sectarianism."¹⁰³ This reasoning is circular: according to L. Barnard, the *Doctrine of Addai* is our

¹⁰² Yamauchi, E.M., *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins* (Gorgias Press, 2004).

¹⁰³ Barnard, L.W., "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.," 163.

earliest testimony of Jewish-Christianity in Syria, which suggests that early Syrian Christianity was Jewish-Christian, and because it was Jewish-Christian one should consider the tradition associated with Addai's Palestinian origin and Jewish-Christian orientation authentic.¹⁰⁴ That there are parallels with a certain tradition *does not* demand direct influence or derivation. The search for parallels with Judaism in the Syrian Christian tradition has run rampant. One wonders why this dependency on parallels has lodged itself so effectively in the minds of scholars searching for the beginnings of Christianity in Syria. The parallels between Jewish literary techniques, culture, and ethos have been overstated, I think, in an effort to discover a pristine form of Christianity unadulterated by Paul's social and religious experiment. However, as the record clearly indicated in the Osrhoene region, these parallels have been overstated. It is not that early Christianity in the Osrhoene was decisively anti-Jewish -- rather, it was, apart from Marcion's movement, irrelevant. The earliest sources are not concerned with the issues associated with James in Paul's writings, the *Acts of the Apostles*, the Pseudo-Clementine literature, or Eusebius' *History*. Parallels do not require the assumption of dependence.

¹⁰⁴ Compare G. Quispel's, I think, similarly dubious argument with very little evidence:

"But Addai must be a historical figure. There lived millions of Jews in these regions since the Babylonian exile. Christianity from Palestine recruited its adherents primarily among these Jews. The Pharisees, equally from Palestine, competed with them and sent their missionaries to Mesopotamia too. This explains why the Christians had little or no success in the cities, where Jewish Academies did exist: Nisibis and Seleucia became bishoprics at a much later date. But where this was not the case, the Christian missionaries were very well received by the local Jews. They were of a *different shade* from Paul and did not irritate them by speculations against the Law. So it is said in the Doctrine of Addai, that Addai, when coming to Edessa, dwelt in the house of Tobias, the son of Tobias, a Jew from Palestine.²⁸ We hear that the Jewish Christian Elxai was in Parthia, when he received his special revelation (Hippolytus, Ref: IX, 13). This shows that Jewish Christians were in these regions at a very early date. Why then could not Addai have been one of the Founding Fathers of Edessa?" G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Jun., 1968), 87.

That there were "millions of Jews in the regions since the Babylonian exile" (which is uncertain) does not demand that we *assume* without evidence that Christianity in these regions were *a priori* of a stripe that were overly concerned with Jewish identity markers. Moreover, our crude understanding of the Elxai and his followers should not be the basis for any grandiose theory of Christian origins. If it is true that the Elkasites influenced Mani, then are to consider Mani a Jewish-Christian-Manichaeen? Rather than merely a Manichaeen. The categorical gymnastics required of these parallels questions their applicability in my estimation.

It is ironic that the scholars that never tire of stressing the non-Hellenized or non-Pauline form of earliest Syrian Christianity use the Pauline Christian categories to define the development of Syrian Christianity. They propose, without basis, that the problems of the West were the problems of the Osrhoene. I contend, rather, that the problems of the West were for the most part *irrelevant* in the Osrhoene. Syria has become the backyard for theories of *the* earliest Jesus Movement. In other words, whatever Christianity ‘originally’ was (or, more often, what we wish it was) is given its own stage on which to present its pristine purity. If Christianity was ‘originally’ apocalyptic in orientation, then the earliest records in the Osrhoene should exhibit apocalyptic tendencies. Likewise, if James, the brother of Jesus, was the ‘true’ representative of Jesus’ teachings (never mind Jesus’ playful rejection of his family, Matt 10:37; Luke 14:26), then one should find a Jerusalem-based Jewish-Christianity interested in preserving Jewish identity markers. This is precisely what has happened after W. Bauer’s monumental work, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*.

It was W. Bauer who proposed that Christian movements around the environs of Edessa expressed beliefs that were eventually deemed heretical.¹⁰⁵ W. Bauer’s work, which still has much merit, was too invested in the dialectic between ‘Orthodoxy’ and ‘Heresy’ to prove persuasive in the long run. It is time that W. Bauer is re-written *without* the artificial and anachronistic categories of ‘Orthodoxy’ and ‘Heresy’: for historians these categories do not belong in the study of the first two centuries of Christian history. The problems of Irenaeus all the way in Lyons are not the problems in Edessa; we must resist Tertullian’s tendency to attribute all theological differences to a select number of founding heretical figures (i.e.

¹⁰⁵ Bauer, W., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (London, 1934).

Valentinus, Marcion, etc.): this is not how theology develops, but how rhetorical response operates.

The search for a Christianity unadulterated by the West (occasionally termed 'Paulinism') has brought the categories of the West to the East, ironically, by the very scholars trying to draw a distinction. Because the problem of dietary restrictions and circumcision weighed so heavily in the Pauline debates, it is assumed that it also played prominently in Edessa, never mind the lack of evidence. This interpretive proclivity has so infiltrated the study of Syrian Christian origins that when a particular text *denies* or *rejects* a tradition associated with what has been reconstructed as Jewish-Christianity it is actually *used as evidence suggesting that these now-rejected beliefs were once accepted*.¹⁰⁶ Somehow denial has come to equate former adherence. I propose, rather, that rejections of particular beliefs do *not* equate former adherence. In most cases these rhetorical moves are *in accordance with* prior beliefs, not against them. A. DeConick, for example, argues that because the *Gospel of Thomas* parodies the apocalypse, it once believed in the imminent apocalypse.¹⁰⁷ Likewise DeConick also argues that because *Thomas* spiritualizes circumcision and the Sabbath,¹⁰⁸ the community once practiced circumcision and the Sabbath -- making them Jewish-Christians. Here DeConick carefully follows the path set forth by Quispel:

The Gospel of Thomas however does not only contain an independent tradition, but this tradition is positively Jewish Christian. So when James is held to be

¹⁰⁶ This is what A. DeConick has proposed regarding the questions in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Cf. A. DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 65-69.

¹⁰⁷ DeConick, A., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 212-237.

¹⁰⁸ DeConick, A., *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation* (T&T Clark, 2006), 131-132. Cf. Baarda, T., "If you do not sabbatize the Sabbath: the Sabbath as God or world in gnostic understanding (Ev Thom Log 27)," in: R. Broek; T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld, eds., *Knowledge of God*, 1988, 178-201. Also, Bauckham, R.J., Sabbath and Sunday in the post-apostolic church, in: Carson D, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's day*, 1982, 252-298. Brown, P., The Sabbath and the week in Thomas 27, *Novum Testamentum* 34, 1992, 193.

the primate of the whole church (1.12), or when the sabbath is imposed (1.27), or when the Pharisees are considered to dispose of the oral tradition transmitted by Moses (1.39). Though these sayings have marked affinities with the Gospel tradition of the Clementines, and so reveal their Jewish-Christian character, they show none of the particularities of the heterodox Jewish Christians. They reflect the views of the "orthodox Jewish Christians," whose existence has been disclosed by Daniélou.¹⁰⁹

This argument falls apart on closer analysis. First, as stated before, James *is not* declared the leader of the whole church. He is, rather, parodied, and then followed by the true 'hero' of the Gospel: Thomas. Much more will be said about this in chapter two. Second, *Thomas 27* could hardly be read as anything but a 'spiritualization' of the Sabbath tradition in accord with speculations about the Genesis 1 narrative -- not as recommendations to follow a strict Sabbath observance in accord with Pharisaical rules:

27.1 If you do not fast to the world you will not find the kingdom.
27.2 If you do not make the Sabbath a (true) Sabbath, you will not see the Father.

Nor does the *Gospel of Thomas* consider the Pharisees as those who are responsible "to dispose of the oral tradition transmitted by Moses." Consider the logion that G. Quispel uses as evidence:

39.1 Jesus said: "The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge and hidden them. They do not enter nor do they permit those who desire to enter to enter."
39.2 As for you, be as cunning as snakes and as innocent as doves.

It is clear that the Thomas tradition here *does not* support the Pharisees. It declares, rather, that the Pharisees are part of the problem; hence their blocking of those who desire entrance from entering (the Kingdom). Consider also Jesus' response to his disciples in logion 52:

52.1 His disciples said to him: "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and all have spoken within you."

¹⁰⁹ G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Jun., 1968), 85.

52.2 He said to them: "You have left out the Living One in your presence, and you spoke (only) about those who are dead."

This hardly parallels the sentiments expressed in the Pseudo-Clementine literature. Jesus here is not the 'final Prophet' but, rather, opposes this belief. He recommends looking toward the present, not the past. Consider also *Thomas'* perspectives on the Jewish identity markers associated with dietary restrictions, prayer, almsgiving, and circumcision:

<<6.1 His disciples asked him: "Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?">>

14.1 Jesus said to them: "If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits." And...

14.2 Whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.

14.3 For, what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which issues from your mouth will pollute you.

53.1 His disciples said to him: "Is circumcision beneficial or (not) for us?"

53.2 He said to them: "If it were beneficial their father would beget them circumcised from their mother."

Beyond these inconsistencies in regards to the typical category of Jewish-Christianity, it is G. Quispel's introduction of two artificial categories (i.e. orthodox and heterodox Jewish-Christianity) that is most problematic. Our understanding of Jewish-Christianity in general is fragmentary at best. Yet, within this unspecific portrait of Jewish-Christianity, Quispel introduces another distinction. If we barely know what Jewish-Christianity was (or whether it existed) it seems unwise to start distinguishing which aspects were 'orthodox' and which were 'heterodox.' There is no evidence for this distinction. The *Gospel of Thomas* and early Edessene Christianity does not fit the categories that G. Quispel has tried to thrust upon it. Moreover, the very term 'Jewish-Christian' really needs to be sharpened in its application. It should no longer mean Jews that were Christian, but that Christians (including ethically

Jewish and Gentile ones) maintained Jewish *praxis*. I think J. Taylor has presented this point best, and I will quote her at length:

Whether all these very diverse phenomena should be classified within the umbrella term 'Jewish-Christianity' is indeed very questionable. There is no doubt that Jewish-Christians, defined as Christian Jews and their Gentile converts who maintained Jewish praxis, existed throughout the first four centuries of the Christian Church, and indeed, for all we know, for many centuries afterward. Jewish-Christianity was not, however, a multifibrous strand of heterodox sectarianism unravelling from the Jerusalem community via Pella. Jewish-Christian groups probably arose quite independently of the Jerusalem community in various churches which had an ethnically Jewish foundation and considered Christian belief to be entirely consistent with the praxis of Judaism which they had maintained prior to baptism. Other groups were Judaizing and Judaistic in various ways. Jewish forms of thought and expression were very predominant in the early Church, and continued to influence later churches to greater or lesser degrees; but Jewish forms of thought and expression, as far as they can be identified, are not indicative of the existence of Jewish-Christians as such. There was no recognisable peculiar theology to link all the groups that have been called 'Jewish-Christian' together, and at least one group, the Nazoraeans, appear to have been within the bounds of orthodox belief. Their distinguishing mark was the maintenance of Jewish praxis, and only this.¹¹⁰

We must allow ourselves to be surprised by Syria. It is more than plausible to discover that the problems of Paul and James were not the problems of the *Gospel of Thomas* or Edessa. This is certainly borne out by the movement associated with Marcion.

Marcion and the Marcionites

In light of the near unanimous assumption that Christianity in the Osrhoene and Adiabene was Jewish-Christian, it is rather ironic to admit that the movement with perhaps the most demonstrable evidence in the region is the one associated with Marcion. Marcion, who was as much a theologian as any other in the area, has played the role of arch-heretic in

¹¹⁰ Taylor, J.E., "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity," 327.

the writings of the later heresiologists and the aforementioned *Chronicle of Edessa*.¹¹¹ In contrast to the assumed Jewish-Christian tenor of Syrian Christianity by scholars, the aforementioned *Chronicle of Edessa* begins with Jesus and follows with Marcion, Mani, and Bardaisan! Our earliest extant inscription of a Christian Church comes from a Marcionite church, which reads: “Synagogue of Marcionites of Lebab village of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Xristos), at the expense of the priest Paul in the year 630”¹¹² (i.e. 318/319 C.E.). Despite Marcion’s rejection of the testimonies of the Old Testament, if we were to apply the methods used by those who find Jewish-Christianity under every Syrian stone, then we could expect the term ‘synagogue’ above to be used as evidence for the influence of Jewish-Christianity on Marcionite Christianity. Of course this would be incorrect. A. Vööbus rightly notes that this inscription is “ominous”:

Something of the strength of the Marcionite church is revealed in the territory not far from Lebaba. Cyril of Jerusalem worried about the great danger which the Marcionite communities caused to the Catholic church in this area. In his catacheses he warns his believers concerning these dangers. On entering a strange town, he tells them, they must be careful not to step into a Marcionite church by mistake.¹¹³

Indeed, if one could ‘accidentally’ attend a Marcionite church, then it seems that the Marcionite Church was both not that different from the proto-Orthodox¹¹⁴ and quite popular. We know from Bardaisan that the Marcionites were active in Edessa in the latter half of the

¹¹¹ Because the *Chronicle of Edessa* probably derives from the fifth century its negative estimation of Marcion was probably either caused by anachronistic judgment or an awareness that Marcion was a potent force, while also being an ‘unpopular’ voice. Given that Marcion’s memory was not simply erased, I consider the latter position is closer to the truth.

¹¹² Quoted in Burkitt, F.C., *The Gospel History & its Transmission*, 3rd ed. (London, 1911). See Ch. 9 “Marcion: Christianity without History.”

¹¹³ Vööbus, A., *Asceticism*, 46.

¹¹⁴ By ‘proto-Orthodox’ I mean the beginnings of the theological movement that would eventually triumph in the Council of Nicaea. However, I use this term without any intention of presenting Nicene Christianity as somehow inevitable or better, from a historical perspective.

second century from Eusebius' report that he "composed dialogues against Marcion's followers."¹¹⁵

Whatever the modern and ancient estimation of Marcion's life and career, it should be recognized that he was a man of bold ideas. It was Marcion that took a stand against the violent and, at times, heinous actions by God in the Old Testament Scriptures (i.e. genocide, jealousy, condemnation, etc.). For Marcion, these actions were diametrically opposed to the message of Jesus. Whatever the merits of this belief, it did require a man of profound courage to question what most considered was divine revelation. Marcion was born of Christian parents, one of which one was the Bishop of Sinope around 100 C.E. We don't know, however, the sort of Christianity that his father was a bishop in, but it seems that it was probably of the proto-Orthodox variety.¹¹⁶ He was, after all, kicked out of the church by his father.

Marcion's theological contributions derive from insights drawn from life and nature. One must remember that in antiquity life was often times quite cruel: the infant mortality rate was alarming, clean water was rare, disease rampant, starvation common, poverty pervasive, and war all too common. This condition was associated by Marcion with 'Matter' and 'Law.' This Law was perhaps similar to our notion of 'natural necessity.' It was this natural necessity as Law that mingled with Matter to form the world, humanity, and the animals therein. It was of course humanity that represented the pinnacle of this evolution and it was humanity that yearned for a separation from its Ground (i.e. Matter) that produced its drive toward life in the aspects of Justice within the Law. However, this natural Law was but a shadow of the

¹¹⁵ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, 4.30.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Blackman, E.C., *Marcion and His Influence* (London, 1948); Wilson, R.S., *Marcion: A Study of a Second Century Heretic* (London, 1933); Harnack, A. von, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God* (Durham, N.C., 1990 -- English Translation of the 1921 original).

true Law, which is Grace -- and it is this spiritual Grace that humanity was to strive for. This realm of Grace was inhabited by the *true* God of the universe, and it was this true God that sent forth his Son as a savior to humanity. The God of material Creation and Law rallied his minions in an effort to silence Jesus, the Son of the True God, by crucifying him. But this Jesus was able to overcome death and the material condition. Most impressively, the God of the Law admitted before Christ that he had violated his own commandments. This God of the Law admitted that he was "ignorant." Christ then chose the Apostle Paul to be his unique messenger, which is why for Marcion the Pauline Letters (the ones he deemed authentic) were emphasized above all other texts.

Marcion's bleak interpretation of matter and natural necessity makes his exhortation to severe asceticism understandable. Because the material world of necessity is characterized by a restless driving of a subject-less will, it is best to resist this natural drive and inclination. For Marcion this condition is epitomized by the fecundity that pervades nature in the form of animal and human birth, the ceaseless consumption of corpses, and the human body itself. The human body, for Marcion, is the prison that the Christian initiate must overcome: only then can the spirit within ascend to the realms of Grace, and to the true God that resides there. In the effort to overcome the body, Matter, and Law, Marcion instructed his followers to renounce marriage, sexual intercourse, and meat. They were, rather, to embrace the 'single life' as celibates -- one was to marry Christ alone. Married couples were to commit to a life apart from each other with their minds singly on Christ and the true God. Moreover, within the Church it was *only* those that had renounced 'carnal' existence and embraced absolute celibacy that were permitted to partake of the Lord's Eucharist in Marcionite tradition. It will be noted shortly that this was characteristic of the ethos of early Syrian Christianity as a

whole. For the moment, however, it is important to acknowledge the immense influence that Marcion played in both Christianity as a whole and Syria specifically. It was Marcion that forced the proto-Orthodox to form their own canon and to articulate more clearly their relationship to Jewish tradition. It should be noted, however, that what we know about Marcion and the church inspired by him is fragmentary at best. Though the sources suggest that every Marcionite condemned marriage and embraced the single life, they surely did not. If they did, how is it that we have evidence of a bustling Marcionite movement in Syria three hundred years later? Clearly, there were some that did not completely embrace Marcion's instructions, which may call some of our sources into question. It is possible that a practice of 'levels' emerged in the Marcionite tradition as it did in later Syrian theology: I am specifically reminded of the Syrian *Book of Steps*' distinction between the 'Perfect' and the 'Upright.' Though Marcion was not from Syria, his teachings certainly thrived there.

Quq and the Quqites

Another Christian group that populated second century Edessa was that of the followers of Quq, who were referred to as the 'Quqites.' It was H. Drijvers' brilliant article on this group that finally granted them their due note in history. Drijvers concludes that "Quq was active in the period between Valentinus and Bardaisan, that is to say around 160 A.D."¹¹⁷ If the frequency of treatment in the texts and hymns of the heresiologists is instructive at all, it would seem that Quq and his followers were not all that prominent in Edessa -- but this is far from certain. Maruta of Maipherkat, a fifth century Syrian bishop, describes the Quqites as follows:

¹¹⁷ Drijvers, H.J.W., "Quq and the Quqites: An Unknown Sect in Edessa in the Second Century A.D." *Numen*, Vol. 14, Fasc. 2 (1967), 104-129, 108.

These resemble the Samaritans. They do not bury their dead, but when they have a dead man, they hire others to bury him. The resurrection (of the dead) they deny. They cast out lepers and sufferers from elephantiasis and other such ills. They have invented twelve evangelists with the names of the twelve apostles. They have also mutilated the whole of the New Testament, but not the Old.¹¹⁸

Though this source comes to us from Bar Hebraeus¹¹⁹ in the thirteenth century, his source is much earlier (i.e. Maruta of Maipherkat in the fifth century). It would seem rather odd for Bar Hebraeus to ‘randomly’ select Maruta of Maipherkat out of so many more prominent Syrian theologians or bishops. If we followed the tendency to see Jewish-Christianity everywhere in Edessa, one could, I suppose, consider Quq and the Quqites as semi-Jewish-Christians – it’s not as if they saw themselves as an integration of two official faiths: Judaism and Christianity. They apparently rejected the ‘resurrection of the dead’ and maintained use of the Old Testament. The Quqites were negatively disposed to corpses -- something which the *Gospel of Thomas* echoes. Moreover, the Quqites appear to be concerned with maintaining a sense of ritual purity. According to Barḥadbešabba ‘Arbaia of the great school of Nisibis,¹²⁰ Quq was accused of marrying his father’s spouse and charged with joining ‘Chaldean doctrine’ with Scripture. The mixing of Chaldean (i.e. Assyrian) philosophical thought with Old Testament Scripture is quite sensible in a city such as Edessa. Barḥadbešabba ‘Arbaia further declares that the Quqites reject not only the resurrection of the dead but also the ‘Last Day,’ the consummation of the age.¹²¹ They do, however, continue to ascribe to the Assyrian notion that the ‘seven planets’ and twelve signs of the zodiac influence their lives. Bardaisan’s

¹¹⁸ Text after Rahmaniō, c., reprinted in F. Nau, Bar Hebraeus *Sur les Hérésies*, PO XIII, Paris 1919, quoted in H.J.W. Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” 108.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Takahashi, H., *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography*, Piscataway (NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005)

¹²⁰ Cited from Drijvers, H.J.W., “Quq and the Quqites,” 108-109.

¹²¹ H. Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” 113.

refutation of this belief in his *Book of the Laws of the Countries* indicates that this was a common belief in Edessa. He argued that the planets and governors did not rule over Christians, but it was they, rather, that ruled over them.

The mythology of the Quqites is related to us by Theodore bar Khonai,¹²² an eighth century theologian and author of the *Scholia* on the Old and New Testaments, which I will quote at length¹²³:

They say that God was born out of the sea, that is that (sea) which lies in the empire of light and they call this the “wakeful sea” (or: angelic sea) and say that the sea of light and the earth existed before God. Now when God was born from the “wakeful sea” (or: angelic sea), he sat upon the waters, looked upon them and saw his own image in them. He stretched forth his hand and seized it. It was a spouse to him, he had intercourse with her and procreated many gods and goddesses with her.

The insights of the above text are not as novel as one might initially think. From time immemorial humanity has searched not only for the origin of the world, but also the origin of God. Though this may seem blasphemous or pompous to some, it is at home within the broad range of religious speculation in the ancient world. The birth of God from a ‘sea’ of subjectless drives is elaborated in a number of Egyptian Pyramid/Coffin Texts, as well as early Vedic literature in the Indus River Valley.¹²⁴ The peoples from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers also reference a ‘sea’ that births forth the gods in the *Enuma Elish*, which the Biblical text of Genesis follows in the first chapter. This, along with the ‘fall of Wisdom (Sophia)’ motif in

¹²² See Chabot, J. B., “Syriac Language and Literature,” *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1912); Wright, W., *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London, 1894), 24-288.

¹²³ The following selections have been taken from H. Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” 113-114.

¹²⁴ Cf. Allen, J.P., *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1988).

certain 'biblical demiurgical'¹²⁵ texts (i.e. the *Apocryphon of John*), I think, is the reference point for the Quqite myth articulated above.¹²⁶ It begins with a not so subtle proposition: God was born! It seems quite possible that the Quqites were referencing the Creation story in Genesis 1, where the Spirit of God hovers over the waters (of the wakeful sea). This primordial sea, however, is not the domain of the awful, but of the realm of light, which suggests that the Good stands at the foundations of the world. This 'wakeful sea' participates, clearly, in the angelic domain (of light), which is indicated by its secondary reference as the 'angelic sea.' God, for the Quqites, was not a primordial *a priori* fact: God must come from somewhere. What is this somewhere or something? It is the 'wakeful' sea. At some point this wakeful sea separated itself from itself, creating the earth. One might assume that the wakeful sea needed to 'condense' in a certain matter to provide this separation. This 'searching' for a place to be *as* the creation moment, is echoed in the fragments of Tatian preserved in Patristic record:

Against Tatian, who says that the words, "Let there be light," are to be taken as a prayer. If He who uttered it knew a superior God, how is it that He says, "I am God, and there is none beside me?" He said that there are punishments for blasphemies, foolish talking, and licentious words, which are punished and chastised by the Logos. And he said that women were punished on account of their hair and ornaments by a power placed over those things, which also gave

¹²⁵ I borrow this term from M.A. Williams' important book *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). M. Williams has shown how the category of 'Gnosticism' has negatively influenced scholarship on these texts, and that the charges of elitism and 'world-hating' are not to be trusted as historical evidence of this movement, but as rhetorical engagements by opposing parties. The groups formerly called "Gnostics" have a great deal of diversity and cannot be categorized under one broad and limiting theological system. Many of these groups maintained use of the Old Testament but remained uncomfortable with the character of the God espoused therein. The world was created *by accident* in these traditions by a lesser emergent 'god', referred to in Platonic tradition as the 'Demiurge.' I have elected to use the more specific term of 'biblical demiurgical' traditions as a way of acknowledging the centrality of the demiurgical traditions while also acknowledging the use of the Old (and sometimes New) Testaments as sources for interpreting the world's condition. See also the immensely important study by K.L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005).

¹²⁶ The reason I don't just *assume* that this tradition derives from first century 'gnostic' systems is that I don't believe we have enough evidence to determine which direction the dependence may have gone. Until further evidence is supplied, I am content to see the Quqite myth amidst the background of the broader and more ancient Mesopotamian context.

strength to Samson by his hair, and punishes those who by the ornament of their hair are urged on to fornication.¹²⁷

For Tatian, God needed to *hope for Light* as a way of solving His primordial problem: God was 'stuck' in a sort of non-existence. It was only the Light that could cure this *a priori* condition.

Whatever the case, this God *came forth*, emerged. Then God looked back at what he had left behind. He sat atop the waters and pondered his surroundings. Suddenly God recognized his image in the wakeful sea below. Intrigued by this, he extended his hand to touch this image. We don't know, however, whether he did this out of horror or out of interest. What he knew, however, was that he had separated from what he once was. This was readily apparent by the image of himself in the waters. Once he seized it, he was overcome with immense sexual desire for the image of himself. Again, this is not unprecedented in the ancient world. For centuries the Egyptians had charged that both God and the world were born from masturbation.¹²⁸ This is also paralleled in the Aphrodite myth when she is born from the foam of the sea. This is certainly being echoed in the Quqite myth. God's image was, it seems suddenly, recognized as female. As in the Egyptian story-world, this intercourse between God's substance and his being produced the myriad entities inhabiting the world. This mythological specter should not be dismissed as patently ridiculous. There is a certain amount of boldness required to ask the 'un-ask-able' question: where God came from. God, in the ancient world, was not a primordial fact; to assume such as axiomatic is to fail to appreciate the depth of human thought and spirit. The more important point, however, is to

¹²⁷ Quoted by Clement of Alexandria, translated by J.E. Ryland. From the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2. Edited by A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A.C. Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).

¹²⁸ Cf. Allen, J.P., *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts*, Yale Egyptological Seminar, Dept. Of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Graduate School, Yale University (1988), 13-17.

notice how the Quqite myth adopts the biblical God for the purpose of understanding the difference between matter and the spiritual realm.

The Quqite myth continues:

They call her Mother of Life and say that she formed seventy worlds (Aeons) and twelve rulers. Furthermore they assert that at some distance from this god, who was born from the “wakeful sea,” there was something like a dead image, that is a statue without movement or life, without an idea or the faculty of thought. When god had seen that this was ugly and horrible and when this did not make a good impression on him, he conceived the plan of removing it from there and throwing it from him, but then he bethought himself: ‘Since there is no life therein nor faculty of thinking nor thought to be able to wage war with me and there is not any inducement to badness found in it, it is not just that I should drive it from here. But I shall give it of my own strength and of my own movement and thought and then it will declare war upon me!’

This image in the waters the God copulated with was referred to as the ‘Mother of Life.’ She formed the seventy realms and created the twelve signs of the zodiac to rule the year. This suggests that the Quqites were concerned with the power of fate and the potency of the stars and planets (something that Bardaisan and a text called the *Dialogue of the Savior* will contend with).

Our text tells us that there was something left over from God’s emergence from the wakeful sea. It seems God and the Mother of Life had excreted a substance leaving behind an ugly dead image. This was, for the divine pair, an awful realization. This floating carcass forced God and the Mother of Life to recognize that they too emerged from such muck or that they were responsible for leaving behind this muck. It was, for God and the Mother of Life the epitome of the ‘horrible.’ Thus God and the Mother of Life resolved to cast this dead image, again, from themselves. They wanted, it seems, to remove the memory of the ‘horrible’ from which they emerged. Yet, a moment of compassion overcame God. He recognized that this dead image was not responsible for his condition, and that there was no inclination

toward evil in him. He was, rather, a floating lifeless corpse. God had compassion on this subject-less corpse and determined to give this corpse what he himself had gained -- the life of the Spirit. He wanted this dead image to come forth into the world of Light, just as he did. So, in a gesture of self-sacrifice, God gave this dead image his 'strength,' 'movement,' and 'thought.' Yet the rationale for this 'gift' is quite unexpected: the 'living-dead image' will then 'make war' on God. However, this may not be God's intention, but the inevitable result. This dead image, which exists in Matter is granted a piece of the divine life; but when this imbalance of a subjectless drive with a spirit is permitted to evolve, it will, inevitably, resist both its condition and its creator -- this is the war that would come. Compassion had turned tragic.

The tragic within the Quqite myth continues:

They say that he instructed the aeons to develop the flame of love and they poured forth part of their life and emitted it into this bad statue. That image now turned its soul and thought upon making war with them. And they say that the adherents of the party of Good fought forty-two battles with it. And the more the number of battles increased, the more carnal forces were born, that is wild animals and cattle and creeping things of the earth...

God responds to this impending condition of war with the 'flame of love.' He and his divine entourage breathed their life into this dead image. However, this animated image suffered from ignorance. He knew not whence he came and for what reason he existed. His condition was that of God in the wakeful sea. He turned around and around searching for another, searching for a reason: but there was none. Then, suddenly, he saw the world of light above. Perhaps we may assume that jealousy came over him, or perhaps a yearning for vengeance for his condition. It was the emergence of God that 'left over' this dead excretion, this dead image. Perhaps the image thought that God was responsible for his condition, and he resented this. Thus forty-two battles ensued. These battles were not of the sword and shield sort, but of

metaphysical and physical mixing. The mixing of spirit, which God had given the remaining image, with matter created the carnal drive that dominates nature. From it were produced wild animals and creeping things. It is not that animals are bad for the Quqites, but that they are imbalanced. This imbalance must be defeated by overcoming the material condition of the body, and to emerge as God did from this muck toward the wakeful sea -- this is humanity's goal.

Fortunately, the Quqite myth does not end in war:

Once, they relate, that Mother of Life descended to this statue, accompanied by seven virgins. When she had arrived there, it raised itself up and blew upon her. Its breath penetrated into her genitals, she became unclean and did not return to the dwelling of the gods, her companions.

The Mother of Life, in the Quqite system, plays the part that the breath of God plays in Genesis 1. She, like the Spirit of God that hovered over the waters in Genesis 1, descends from the divine realm and hovers over this enlivened image. In a strange reversal of the expected this enlivened image breathes into her! This breath, like a seed, penetrated her making her life the animals that copulate in such a way. This, according to the Quqites, made her 'unclean.' The story continues:

She remained for seven days in a condition of impurity and cast the seven virgins who accompanied her into the mouth of that great cavern. This swallowed them up during the seven days of the uncleanness of the Mother of Life, who threw him one of them every day. Now the gods were forced to come and save the seven virgins, whom the Mother of Life had cast into the gullet of that great cavern. They say that the adherents of the party of Evil at set times celebrate a feast, cause these virgins to come forth and give them to their sons, and ornament themselves with the light deriving from them. That then the adherents of the party of good, their betrothed ones, descend on the day of the feast and that each of them carries off his betrothed.

The Mother of Life protected her seven companions (presumably the 'seven planets') by hiding them in the mouth of a great cavern (presumably the material world). This cavern (of

the material world) swallowed them up during the 'seven days of uncleanness' (presumably the seven days of Creation in Genesis 1). This occasion provided the impetus for the divine realm above to pursue the interests of the material world below. Beyond the mythological overlay exists the simple proposition that the divine is 'trapped' in the material world below. The good forces and the evil forces, the Quqites tell us, compete for the divine spirit of the virgins and the Mother of Life trapped in the material world. The party of evil, it seems, wants to usurp their power, whereas the party of good wants to liberate the divine sparks trapped in the material condition. It is also possible that this part of the mythological narrative may represent a play on the Nephilim in Genesis 6:1-4. Perhaps it was these 'sons of god' that the Quqites claimed "cause these virgins to come forth and give them to their sons, and ornament themselves with the light deriving from them." However, the party of evil does not have the final word. There is salvation to come:

They also say that the coming of our Lord to the world was for no other reason than the saving of his betrothed, who was here. They say that He carried her off and rose up from the Jordan and saw that the daughter of the Mother of Life... from Egypt. They assert regarding the other virgins that one is in Hatra, another in Mabbug and still another in Harran. Their betrothed look down on them, and when their time is come, they liberate them.

The Lord came to the world as Jesus, according to the Quqites, in order to save one of the seven spiritual virgins that the Mother of Life had hid in the world. The baptismal scene in the Jesus tradition was interpreted as 'bridal chamber' of sorts. It was in Jesus' baptism that he liberated this spirit, his betrothed. This process is but the beginning; there are other virgins yet to be liberated. One of these 'spiritual virgins' is located near Edessa in the city of Harran, which was important in the life of Abraham. Two of the other three virgins are located relatively close to Edessa in Hatra and Mabbug. It is possible that these cities serve as markers of the Quqite sphere of influence. The reference to Egypt may also suggest that one

of these 'spiritual virgins' had been lost in Egypt, which recalls the *Hymn of the Pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas*. The Quqite myth, whatever its modern estimation, presented a dramatic narrative of divine and human origins and a way forward. This myth was a uniquely Syrian (Edessene) integration of disparate traditions into one persuasive theological whole.

How does one situate the mythology and influence of the Quqites in Edessa? A. Harnack proposed that the Quqites were the *earliest* Christian group in Edessa.¹²⁹ The merits of this proposal, however, are difficult to determine. Though the Quqites were certainly very early, we don't have enough evidence to conclude that they were the earliest Christian¹³⁰ group. But there is enough to acknowledge that they *may* have been. What is clear, however, is that their mythology was surely influential enough in Syria to merit their mention by theologians for centuries. H. Drijvers' work on the Quqites is very helpful in situating this group within the context of second century Osrhoene. H. Drijvers rightly recognizes the rather loose connections with what has been termed 'Jewish-Christianity.' Yes, the Quqites used the Old Testament and were concerned with ritual purity, but does this mean that they were 'Jewish-Christian'?¹³¹ The Quqites, it seems, were as dependent on Syro-Mesopotamian mythology¹³² as they were Jewish and Christian theology. I think H. Drijvers' conclusion (beyond the charge of 'gnosticism') is correct and I will quote it at length:

¹²⁹ A. Harnack, *Der Ketzer-Katalog des Bischofs Maruta von Maipherkat*, S. 10. cited in H.J.W. Drijvers, "Quq and the Quqites," 125.

¹³⁰ I justify my use of the term 'Christian' rather than 'Jewish-Christian' or biblical demiurgical, because the term 'Christian' carries no negative connotations whereas the others can for some groups. In other words, in modern scholarship, if a group is referred to as 'Christian' they are typically approached positively, whereas the opposite is true of those groups termed 'gnostic.'

¹³¹ In this term, for instance, the charge of being 'Jewish-Christian' serves to separate the group from an anachronistic notion of 'normative' Christianity. In doing such, the Quqites are marginalized and considered somehow 'less-authentic.' But, again, this is not the business of the historian but the theologian.

¹³² As well as Greek mythology in regards to the birth of Aphrodite from the foam of the sea.

[O]ne cannot say whether the sect was Christian or not, nor whether it was Jewish. It is Jewish with pagan and Christian elements, pagan with Jewish and Christian elements, etc. The same complexity is found in Bardaisan. An example is the conception of the seven saviours. On the one hand this connects the Quqites with the Jewish Christian circles of the Pseudo-Clementines with its series of prophets who succeed one another, on the other with the idea of the cyclical appearance of the messenger of light, which appears in Manichaeism, but also in the Coptic gnostic writings of Chenoboskion. With this latter group there are more parallels: the conception of the “dead image” of the primordial Adam; the image of the “Bridal-Chamber,” which we find in the Gospel of Philip and with which certain sacraments may have been connected... If we remember, too, that the idea of the “Bridal-Chamber” is also found with Bardaisan, as it is in the wedding hymn of the *Acta Thomae*, where again the Mother appears with seven virgins and seven sons (bridesmen), the unity in diversity of the many different groups is even more clearly illuminated.¹³³

I would also like to agree with and emphasize Drijvers’ important recommendation that “It seems impossible to work with contrasts between Christian Jews, Christian Gentiles and Gnostics in this century and this town [of Edessa].”¹³⁴ The extent of Jewishness is entirely relative, as is the extent of a group’s ‘gnostic’ or biblical demiurgical proclivities. That the Quqites were Christian is exemplified by their use of the New Testament -- which, one would assume was purely the domain of Christian theology. This nexus between Judaism, Christianity, and biblical demiurgism in the Quqite tradition expands our notions of what the boundaries of Christianity in Syria were. While the Quqites were certainly eclectic and syncretistic, we should not consider them *only* as such; rather, they derive from a world when the boundaries between Judaism, Christianity, and biblical demiurgism were not yet set. The Quqites did not see themselves as syncretistic, but as a true manifestation of their own ‘Christian’ faith. We must be careful to remember that the later biblical demiurgical systems needed to develop. They did not just drop from the sky or derive from one particular person.

¹³³ Drijvers, H.J.W., “Quq and the Quqites,” 126-127.

¹³⁴ Drijvers, H.J.W., “Quq and the Quqites,” 125.

The Quqites are a perfect example of the eclecticism that characterized religious imagination and mythological experimentation in the crucible of the Syrian Orient. We must resist Irenaeus' strategy of locating every 'heresy' within one heresiarch. The attribution of diversity to one figure serves to marginalize a movement and characterize it as schismatic from some 'normative' understanding of a broader faith. This charge, however, moves in both directions. While the Orthodox Church today considers St. Ephrem as a pillar of Christianity in Syria, his own testimony informs us that even his faith -- because of its apparent novelty in Edessa -- was attributed to Bishop Palut, rather than Christ. Along with St. Ephrem, I would contend that he was not a Palutian, but a Christian -- but this also exposes the relativity associated with the charge that all perceived diversity should be attributed to one figure: for St. Ephrem this was Palut, for Quq it was Valentinus. I propose, from a historical perspective, that both Quq and Ephrem should be permitted to represent their own unique expressions of Christian faith. Granted, the Quqites had demiurgical associations, but they also had Christian associations. One cannot *assume* that St. Ephrem represents a pure Christianity in Syria -- especially considering that he was called a Palutian. Who was right is a theological problem, not a historical problem. I also agree with H. Drijver's cautious proposal that Valentinus drew upon earlier 'gnostic-like' material, rather than serving as *the* original author of his entire "mystico-rationalistic system."¹³⁵ Apart from the *Gospel of Thomas* and Bardaisan's *Laws of the Countries*, the Quqite myth is our only mythological reference point (beyond Scripture) for the city of Edessa in the second century. This is an important source and should not be ignored.

Baptismal Groups

¹³⁵ Drijvers, H.J.W., "Quq and the Quqites," 128-129.

The only 'baptizing' group operating near the Osrhoene in the second century was one associated with a certain Elchasi, from whom we get the group referred to as 'the Elchasites.' Our understanding of this group, however, remains very fragmentary. Elchasi was active in the early second century in northern Mesopotamia, perhaps not too far from Nisibis and was responsible for starting a baptismal group of some variety. They are often considered a Jewish-Christian group because they integrated an observance of the Sabbath and the message of Jesus. These followers of Elchasi (the Elchasites) were present in Apameia, Palestine, and Rome in the second and early third centuries.¹³⁶ The origins of another perhaps related baptismal group, the Mandaeans, who still exist today, remain controversial as well.¹³⁷ The *Mandaean John-Book* complicates the origins of the Mandaean movement¹³⁸; if they were authentically connected to the original movement of John the Baptist, how are we to make sense of their thoroughly anti-Jewish and anti-Christian sentiments expressed in the *Mandaean John-Book*?¹³⁹ I suspect by acknowledging that they *used* Jewish literary and religious tropes without necessarily *being* Jewish. We should remember that Jewish theological categories were afloat in the Mesopotamian air for quite some time, and it is no stretch to assume that the Mandaeans integrated some of them. Yet, the Mandaean problem may not shed light on the Manichaean movement as much as on the Elchasite movement. According to the Arab an-Nadim, in the *Fihrist*,¹⁴⁰ it was the Elchasites that influenced Mani,

¹³⁶ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 77 (1973), 23-59, 56.

¹³⁷ Cf. Lupieri, E., *The Mandaeans: The Last Gnostics*, trans., C. Hindley (Eerdmans, 2001); Buckley, J.J., *The Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (American Academy of Religion Book, 2002); Drower, E.S., *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran: Their Cults, Customs, Magic Legends, and Folklore* (Gorgias Press Reprint, 2002).

¹³⁸ Mead, G.R.S., *Gnostic John the Baptizer: Selections from the Mandaean John-Book* (A Kessinger reprint).

¹³⁹ In the *Mandaean John-Book* the Spirit of God, 'Ruach,' is a demonic spirit, as is Jesus.

¹⁴⁰ See Flügel, G., *Mani. Seine Lehre u. seine Schriften* (Leipzig, 1862), 269.

not (so it would seem) the Mandaeans -- though this does not mean that they were not yet in existence. Mani's father had joined the Elchasite movement, which put the young Mani in their company for over a decade and a half.¹⁴¹ In the *Cologne Mani Code*, Mani echoes this report declaring: "I was reared and brought up in this sect of the baptists, and to its leaders and presbyters I was related through the upbringing of my body."¹⁴² According to A. Henrichs, this group was thoroughly 'Jewish Christian':

[T]he Elchasaites of the Cologne Codex were not only rooted in traditions of definite Jewish origin, including the Sabbath, but also recognized as binding for their communal life the message of Jesus and an unknown version of the Christian Gospels. The Christian element is consistently referred to as αἱ ἐντολαὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος. We come to realize that the relation of Manichaeism and Mandaism was less direct and more complicated than is generally believed. There remains the remote possibility that Mani himself, or parts of the Manichaean literature such as the Psalms of Thomas, came under the influence of still another baptist sect, to be located somewhere in Babylonia or Mesopotamia and related to, or identical with, the later Mandaeans.¹⁴³

Once again the problematic category of 'Jewish Christianity' interrupts: one needs more than an appeal to Sabbath observance to trace a movement back to Palestine. Jews had lived near Babylon and in Mesopotamia for generations, so Jewish associations should not be surprising or directly connected to Jerusalem. What was meant by Sabbath observance is difficult to determine; if Christians in the West are instructive here, then we should not assume that Sabbath meant 'Sabbath' in the Pharisaic or Rabbinic sense.

A. Henrichs describes the following points of agreement between the Manichaeans and the Elchasites:

¹⁴¹ Cf. Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 44-45.

¹⁴² *Cologne Mani Codex*, 103.1-194.10, cited in A. Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 34.

¹⁴³ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 44-45.

- (1) "The ritualistic conception of piety,"¹⁴⁴ which involved repeated acts of purification through baptism and washing of both the self and food.
- (2) "The keeping of the Sabbath,"¹⁴⁵ in a manner that remains vague.
- (3) "The baptisms or repeated ritual ablutions of the whole body in running water."¹⁴⁶
- (4) The "Celebration of the Eucharist with unleavened bread and mere water,"¹⁴⁷ which parallels much of the early Syrian Christian aversion to wine.
- (5) "The rejection of certain parts of the Old and New Testament, including all of St. Paul,"¹⁴⁸ which echoes the activities of the Ebionites, Quqites, and Marcionites.
- (6) A form of "Encratism,"¹⁴⁹ which prohibited the consumption of meat, wine, and exhorted all to abstain from women. Each of the preceding principles is nearly universal within second century Syrian Christian groups.
- (7) "The doctrine of the 'True Prophet,'"¹⁵⁰ which departs from the Thomas tradition, but echoes the Pseudo-Clementine hermeneutic.
- (8) Finally, and most controversial in the Syrian Orient, was the belief in "the resurrection of the body."¹⁵¹

Beyond the observance of the Sabbath, there is little that links these groups to Judaism in Palestine. The celebration of Eucharist, the rejection of various books from the

¹⁴⁴ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 47.

¹⁴⁵ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 48.

¹⁴⁶ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 50.

¹⁴⁷ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 50.

¹⁴⁸ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 51.

¹⁴⁹ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 53.

¹⁵⁰ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 54.

¹⁵¹ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 55.

Old and New Testaments, and encratism all indicate a departure from Judaism, or Jewish roots. In my opinion, the Mandaeans, Manichaeans, and the Elchasites each represent *syncretistic movements* rather than movements keen on the *preservation* of Jewish identity markers. Were the Mandaeans originally Jewish? Doubtful.¹⁵² It seems that within the crucible of Mesopotamian religion, it is more likely that Jewish elements were *integrated into* Mandaeanism, rather than *preserved as a form of continued Pharisaic Jewish observance*.

According to A. Henrichs, most of Manichaeism can be understood as a derivation from the earlier Elchasite movement.¹⁵³ "But at the same time, the Cologne Codex makes us aware of the tremendous difference in their respective conceptions of purity. The baptists believed in external ablutions and vegetarian diet as means of individual purification; their final aim was the purification and salvation of the body. For Mani, purification was a cosmic process, the separation of spirit and matter in which man as a microcosmos participated."¹⁵⁴ It is in this sense that Manichaeism was a theology of 'emergence,' and it was this that made it most distinctive. For Mani, the human person, i.e. the soul, must come forth from matter and ascend to its true being in the celestial and ethereal realms. This recalls the very important 'twin-ship' doctrine within Manichaeism. It was believed that every person on earth had a 'double' in the ethereal worlds above, as did Mani and Jesus. This double was the preexistent mirror 'image' of the self trapped in matter. In comparison to the 'bodily image,' however, this other primordial celestial image was terrifying. This heavenly double *was* and *is* the true self, but the problem for the Manichaean is that he or she is trapped in matter. Yet, fortunately, it is this heavenly double that will come to liberate the twin self below in the world of matter. In

¹⁵² Cf. Yamauchi, E.M., *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins* (Gorgias Press, 2004).

¹⁵³ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 58-59.

¹⁵⁴ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 58-59.

Kephalaia 12.9 and *Homily* 68.15 we learn that the True God above sent forth messengers in the manner that God sent forth prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Yet, this line of inspired prophets continued with Jesus, Paul, Marcion, and Bardaisan, the latter two of which were quite influential in the Osrhoene.¹⁵⁵ Mani, however, was proclaimed the last of these prophets. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is important to note that Mani had access to the *Gospel of John*, *St. Paul's Letters*, and Tatian's *Diatesseron* (and perhaps the *Gospel of Thomas*).¹⁵⁶ Moreover, it has become increasingly apparent that Manichaeism was both *influenced* by early Christianity in the Syrian Orient and responsible for *influencing* later forms of asceticism. It is a source and group that cannot be ignored when it comes to the context for early Syrian Christianity; they were, along with the Marcionites, among the most prominent religious forces in the Osrhoene. Today, it is only the Mandaeans that preserve the syncretistic genius of these early movements: they are the final expression of this baptism-oriented spirituality of bodily transcendence.

Personalities in Syria

A. Vööbus once declared that, "Because of the profound influence of certain men of great religious and spiritual force, Christianity was consistently crystallized in the countries of the Euphrates and the Tigris as a movement which to a large extent absorbed rigid and radical asceticism."¹⁵⁷ This is most certainly true. It was charisma and holiness that inspired the praxis of the generations that followed, not necessarily theology. In the ancient world the question is whether something 'works,' whether it is 'effective,' not whether it is theologically

¹⁵⁵ Henrichs, A., "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," 25.

¹⁵⁶ Alfrie, P., *Les Écritures Manichéennes* II (Paris, 1919), 169-170.

¹⁵⁷ Vööbus, *Asceticism*, 31.

or logically sound. The early Christians in Syria followed *lives*, not abstract principles or doctrines. It was holiness -- which in Syria was interpreted *as* asceticism -- that precipitated the Syrian Christian praxis. This is certainly the case with the great charismatic from the “land of the Assyrians”: Tatian.

Tatian

A. Vööbus argues that his place of birth was in the land between the Tigris and Media rivers, probably in the city of Ḥadiab around 120 C.E. Unfortunately, scholars can depend only on the various Patristic citations of his life (e.g. Clement of Alexandria,¹⁵⁸ Theodoret,¹⁵⁹ and Epiphanius¹⁶⁰) and his polemical work, *Oration to the Greeks*. These sources suggest that Tatian’s parents spoke the Edessene dialect of Aramaic: Syriac. According to tradition, Tatian was converted to Christianity in Rome (ca. 150-165)¹⁶¹ under the auspices of St. Justin the Martyr. After his renowned teacher’s death he returned to Syria to embrace a form of Christianity in agreement with his convictions. His *Oration to the Greeks* exhibits his rhetorical rejection of all things Hellenistic, and one may presume that he then returned to his Christian roots in Syria -- which were decidedly ascetic in posture.

According to Clement of Alexandria, Tatian condemned sexual intercourse and reproduction¹⁶² -- something that will define much of the later Thomas and Syrian tradition. According to Irenaeus,¹⁶³ Tatian maintained that Adam, the first human, was not granted life

¹⁵⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.12.81.

¹⁵⁹ Theodoret, *Heresies*, 1.20.

¹⁶⁰ Epiphanius, *Panairon*, 46.1.11.

¹⁶¹ Vööbus, *Asceticism*, 33.

¹⁶² Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.12.86.

¹⁶³ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*.1.26

because of his sin in the Garden, which is another belief that appears in the Thomasine tradition. I remain suspicious, however, of the Valentinian associations attributed to Tatian by Irenaeus as it borders on Tertullian's rhetorical strategy to associate every variance from his interpretation of Christianity with a founding figure. I do think, however, that Tatian's interpretation of the Genesis 1 phrase, "Let there be Light," as a prayer *from God to the world* is quite novel and authentic.¹⁶⁴ In the context of his ascetical disposition, which rejected both the eating of animals and traditional marriage,¹⁶⁵ this novel interpretation of Genesis 1 makes sense, for it represents the Holy Spirit's desire to surmount the physical substrate of the world and reach the heights of the realm of pure 'Spirit,' much like the Thomasine interest in overcoming the world and animal nature in favor of the spiritual world (cf. *Thomas* 29).

Whatever the merits of the attributions (or accusations) of his beliefs, it is his greatest work that presents us the most definitive depiction of his character, the *Diatesseron*. The term 'Diatesseron' derives from the Greek διὰ τεσσάρων meaning a 'derivation of the four' canonical Gospels, which the Syrians called the *Evangelion da-Mehalletē* (the mixed Gospel). This harmony of the Gospels took parallel sayings, stories, and parables and combined them into what appears as a chronological narrative. This seminal work of Syrian Christianity expresses through Tatian's redactions the ethos of a certain sector of Christianity in the Syrian Orient. G. Quispel has shown, I think persuasively, that Tatian incorporated another mysterious 'fifth' source beyond the four canonical Gospels, of which the *Gospel of Thomas* is related. T. Baarda, R. Schippers, and N. Perrin argued in the opposite direction proposing

¹⁶⁴ Origen, *De. Orat.*

¹⁶⁵ Jerome, *Com. in Ep. ad Gal.* 6.

that it was Tatian's *Diatesseron* that influenced the *Gospel of Thomas*.¹⁶⁶ N. Perrin's work, *Thomas and Tatian*, set out to prove a Syriac substratum and that the *Gospel of Thomas* drew from Tatian's traditions. Moreover, N. Perrin was keenly interested in situating *Thomas* in the late second century, rather than B. Grenfell's and A. Hunt's proposed date of ca.140 C.E.¹⁶⁷ In his monograph N. Perrin endeavors to show that there exist 502 Syriac catchwords between the sayings in *Thomas*, which he suggests dwarfs the respective 263 Greek catchwords and 269 Coptic ones. However, what is or isn't a 'semitism' is very difficult to determine and often quite subjective.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, I think Perrin's methodology is flawed: because he assumes that *Thomas* was originally written in Syriac (as it depends, so he claims, on the *Diatesseron*), he

¹⁶⁶ See Baarda, T., "Thomas and Tatian" in: T. Baarda, ed., *Early transmission of words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the text of the New Testament*, (VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 1983), 37-49; Schippers, R., "Het Evangelie van Thomas een onafhankelijke traditie? Antwoord aan professor Quispel," *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 61, 1961, 46-54; Perrin, N., *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (SBLAB 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); Baker, A., *Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron*, *Journal of Theological Studies* 16, 1965, 449-454.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Grenfell, B.P., and Hunt, A.S., *Logia Iesou: Sayings of our Lord from an early Greek papyrus*, Henry Frowde, London, 1897; Grenfell, B.P., and Hunt, A.S., *New sayings of Jesus and fragment of a lost gospel from Oxyrhynchus*, Henry Frowde, New York, 1903; Grenfell, B.P., and Hunt, A.S., *The Oxyrhynchus papyri*, part I, edited with translations and notes, London, 1898, 1-3; Grenfell, B.P., and Hunt, A.S., *The Oxyrhynchus papyri*, part IV, edited with translations and notes, London, 1904.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Baarda, T., "Chose" or "Collected": Concerning an Aramaism in Logion 8 of the Gospel of Thomas and the Question of Independence, *Harvard Theological Review* 84, 1991, 373- 397; Guillaumont, A., Les Semitismes dans L'Évangile selon Thomas: Essai de Classement, *Studies in Gnosticism & Hellenistic Religions* 1981, 190-204; Guillaumont, A., "Sémitismes dans Les Logia de Jésus Retrouvés à Nag-Hamâdi," *Journal Asiatique* 246, 1958, 113-123.

inevitably finds a staggering number semitisms and Syriac catchwords.¹⁶⁹ G. Quispel's important work in *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas* suggests, in contrast to N. Perrin's thesis, that it was Tatian who used traditions related to the *Gospel of Thomas*. This is extremely important for situating the sources for Syrian Christianity in the first two centuries of the Common Era. If Tatian used *Thomas*, and I think G. Quispel is correct here, and if the dating of the Greek fragments of *Thomas* found in Oxyrhynchus are to be dated to the first half of the second century,¹⁷⁰ then I think it is relatively clear that *the Gospel of Thomas is our earliest extant source for Christianity in the Syrian Orient*.

¹⁶⁹ Consider also this critique offered by R.F. Shedinger:

"There are two problems here. First, the argument seems circular. Perrin has not yet established the Gospel's dependence on the Diatessaron. Until he does he cannot use this dependence as a way to reconstruct a hypothetical Syriac original. We do not yet know that a Syriac Gospel of Thomas would resemble the phraseology of the Old Syriac/Diatessaronic tradition. Second, if Perrin follows the Diatessaron where it clearly departs from the Old Syriac, where does he get this Syriac text of the Diatessaron? The original Syriac text of Tatian's Harmony does not exist; it too must be reconstructed, a very difficult process in its own right and one fraught with many potential pitfalls... Perrin's argument from catchwords for a Syriac Gospel of Thomas is cumulative; it is based on an overall assessment of all the apparent catchword associations running throughout the entire sayings collection... It is, however, worth noting Perrin's observation that half the logia in the Gospel of Thomas that contain the word "fire" (*nurā* Syriac) are paired with logia containing the word "light" (*nubrā* Syriac). Because these two Syriac words are homophones, Perrin feels it is not accidental that logia containing "fire" are frequently paired with logia containing "light." This sounds like impressive evidence for an original Syriac Gospel of Thomas until one realizes that only four logia out of 114 actually contain the word "fire," meaning that the confluence of logia containing "fire" and "light" occurs only twice, a phenomenon that could easily be coincidental. This is not to say that Perrin's catchword analysis is of no value. The analysis is thorough and deserves a considerably more detailed assessment of the 502 Syriac catchword associations than can obviously be achieved in this short review. Perrin even invites such a detailed assessment when he writes, "The number of Syriac catch-words is considerable. Even if a third of the *Stichwörter* adduced in the chart were called into question (I believe the challenge remains for the one wishing to discount any one of them), the evidence would still favor a Syriac text." Rhetorical statements like this seem to demonstrate Perrin's intimate awareness of the fragile nature of his argument." From a review of Perrin, N., *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (SBLAB 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), by R.F. Shedinger, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 122, No. 2 (2003), 387-391.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Evelyn-White, H., *The Sayings of Jesus From Oxyrhynchus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920); Fitzmeyer, J.A. "The Oxyrhynchus Logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel According to Thomas," 355-433 in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971); Attridge, H.W. "Appendix: The Greek Fragments" in: *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7 Together With XIII, 2^o, BRIT. LIB. OR. 4926(1), and pOxy. I, 654, 655*, ed., B. Layton. Vol. 1. (New York: Brill, 1989). Consider also R.A. Kraft's important article, "Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 655 Reconsidered," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (1961), 253-262: "P.Ox. 655 consists of eight fragments from a Greek scroll which probably was written before the middle of the third century A.D." *Idem.*, 257.

Beyond Tatian's help presenting *Thomas* as an important source for early Syrian Christianity, he is also helpful in exhibiting much of the praxis of early Syrian Christianity. For Tatian, Jesus presents a way of life to be modeled. Thus Jesus' avoidance of meat, wine, intercourse, and his life of asceticism and celibacy¹⁷¹ is to be the praxis of the Syrian Christian. Of course, it should be noted, that Tatian is but one representative of what was surely a diverse set of Christian communities in the Osrhoene. Tatian also exhibits the influence that Marcion's movement had in the Osrhoene. Consider Clement of Alexandria's remark: "Tatian separates the old man and the new, but not, as we say, understanding the old man to be the law, and the new man to be the Gospel. We agree with him in saying the same thing, but not in the sense he wishes, abrogating the law as if it belonged to another God."¹⁷² Tatian was clearly a complex thinker who was at home in the complex territory of the Syrian Orient. For Tatian, *to be a Christian was to be an ascetic*.¹⁷³

Bardaisan

Though Tatian's *Diatesseron* cast a decisive shadow over Syrian theology for the centuries that followed, there was no more domineering a personality in Edessa than

¹⁷¹ "Tatian condemns and rejects not only marriage, but also meats which God has created for use." -- Hieron.: *Adv. Jovin.*, i. 3.

"Tatian, who maintaining the imaginary flesh of Christ, pronounces all sexual connection impure, who was also the very violent heresiarch of the Encratites, employs an argument of this sort: "If any one sows to the flesh, of the flesh he shall reap corruption;" but he sows to the flesh who is joined to a woman; therefore he who takes a wife and sows in the flesh, of the flesh he shall reap corruption."--HIERON.: Com. in Ep. ad Gal.

From J.E. Ryland's translation in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2. Ed., A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).

¹⁷² Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 3. 12.

¹⁷³ L. Barnard put it this way: "Tatian, then, is best interpreted as a witness to the ascetic and eclectic character of Edessan Christianity in the latter part of the second century." In Barnard, L.W., "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.," 168.

Bardaisan.¹⁷⁴ His name bespeaks his allegiance to his city with its reference to the Daisan, a river that flowed through the great city of Edessa. He was born ca. 154 C.E. to wealthy Parthian parents who, it seems, held rank in the Edessene court. His education was unparalleled and marks his place among the intellectual elite of his day. He was educated at the court of King Abgar Manu the 8th of Edessa and studied with one such Abgar who ascended to the throne in 179 C.E. (or perhaps his successor Abgar the 10th who ascended the throne in 202/203 C.E.). According to our sources there was some sort of disturbance in the political apparatus in Edessa that forced him and his parents to emigrate to Armenia for a brief period of time. It seems, however, that this period was quite formative in his thinking. It is reported that he studied with one Annaduzbar, a mystic priest from Hieropolis who was thoroughly invested in the arts of Chaldean astrology. This period in Armenia may have provided him the needed details to pen his 'History of Armenia,' which today is lost from record. When Bardaisan returned to Edessa he was exposed to the teachings and sermons of Bishop Hystaspes. However, we don't know what type of Christian Bishop Hystaspes was. Whatever his disposition, he is to be credited with the conversion of Bardaisan, the great intellect of Edessene Christianity.

Bardaisan's works, of which only the *Book of the Laws of Countries* survives, were immensely influential in Edessa and its environs. His 150 psalms, modeled on the Biblical psalms, were the lifeblood of the Edessene church until St. Ephrem used his tunes and wrote a more persuasive and eloquent set of competing hymns.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Bardaisan should also be

¹⁷⁴ Much of what follows depends on the following two studies: Ramelli, I., *Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation* (Gorgias Press, 2009); Drijvers, H., *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa* (Gorgias Press, 2007).

¹⁷⁵ Cf. McVey, K.E., trans. and ed., *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989). 10-15.

credited with inspiring much of St. Ephrem's work: he gave him a reason to put pen to paper. It should be noted, however, that charges against 'Jewish-Christians' do not appear in either Bardaisan's or St. Ephrem's polemical hymns. This absence, I think, speaks volumes. It is also possible that some of his lost psalms are preserved in the *Acts of Thomas* (i.e. the *Hymn of the Pearl*) but this is mere speculation. He also purportedly wrote a treatise on India. This may be true given that later authors record his meetings with emissaries and wandering monks from the East, which he referred to as 'Brhamins' in his *Book of the Laws of the Countries*. This work exhibits Bardaisan's place in intellectual society and his impressive cultural acuity. He reports not only on Edessa, but also on philosophies and theologies throughout the broader ancient world. He was most assuredly one of the towering intellects of second century Edessa.

His *Book of the Laws of the Countries* was probably quite similar to his lost treatise, *On Fate* (which may have been the same work). From his extant writing we can tell that he advocated the freedom of the will *over* the powers of the planets and zodiac signs. For Bardaisan, these governors above were certainly influential, but ultimately the human person could exact control over them. The dialogue is staged between a disciple by the name of Abida (or Avida) and disputes the power of the various forces of fate in the ancient world. It is certainly a great work of Syrian syncretism. Clearly Bardaisan inhabited a world that was deeply invested in the courses of the stars above and their influence over a person's life. It is within this mythological specter that Bardaisan shines as the great intellect of Edessa. He has the courage to challenge the potency and rule of the governors above by declaring the autonomy and power of the individual spirit within. This is where he finds the power of Christian conviction.

I think it best to remain cautious when appropriating the descriptions of his beliefs in later Syrian (heresiological) writers. If they are to be trusted, then we can delineate that Bardaisan rejected the physical resurrection and believed that the heavenly bodies were sequestered in opposing genders and, like the Quqites, endowed with what might appear as sexual inclinations. Bardaisan was, more than anything, the preeminent philosopher and theologian of the freedom of the will. For Bardaisan, humanity is endowed with the greatest power: that of his insurmountable ability to overcome the material world and its governors. He was the great philosopher of liberty in a world dictated by command and fate.

One cannot trust the rhetorical flourishes of the great Ephrem in his estimation of Bardaisan -- as this 'rival bashing' is basic to ancient textuality. He was both highly esteemed by his fellow citizens and continued to dominate the Syrian spiritual and philosophical landscape for generations. Indeed, he is also credited with converting the royal family in Edessa, making it one of the first Christian kingdoms. It took the poetic might of St. Ephrem to eventually challenge the prominence of Bardaisan of Edessa. The effort required to undo his predecessor's work is indicative of its lasting legacy.

Other Sources for Syriac Christianity in the First Two Centuries

Beyond the disparate groups and personalities floating in the Osrhoene there exist a number of early texts and later texts that may preserve early traditions. As a measure of control on scholarly imagination, I have elected to concentrate on those texts that have some extant evidence or influence from the first three centuries. What follows is a brief introduction to these texts.

The Odes of Solomon

According to R. Murray, the *Odes of Solomon* probably represent “the earliest extant work in Syriac,”¹⁷⁶ and I see no reason to doubt this. Initially, only a select number of the *Odes* (two of which were complete) were preserved in the Coptic version of a text called *Pistis Sophia* in the *Codex Askewianus* in the British Museum. It was J. Harris in 1909 that brought the complete text of the *Odes of Solomon* to light when he recovered a near complete Syriac version from the Tigris River region. It has been generally accepted that the original language of the *Odes* was Syriac and that it derived from a Syriac milieu.¹⁷⁷ A. Vööbus argues that:

The thought-pattern, religious ring, mystical speech, the influence of the Targumim in biblical text and method of interpretation, Semitic character in style and rhythm, all this seems to demand a solution which sees in these poetical texts a product of the ancient Syrian Christian community.¹⁷⁸

A. Vööbus also draws attention to what he considers baptismal imagery, covenant consciousness, an interest in war imagery and virginity, and the description of salvation as a contest.¹⁷⁹ J. Charlesworth entertained the possibility that the similarities that the *Odes* share with Qumran and the *Gospel of John* might suggest that the *Odes* derive from a similar milieu.¹⁸⁰ R. Grant argued that the *Odes* were penned in Antioch, but I again see little definitive

¹⁷⁶ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Emerton, J.A., “Some Problems of Text and Language in the Odes of Solomon,” *JTS*, NS 18 (1967), 372-406; Montgomery, J.A., “The Recently Discovered Odes of Solomon,” *The Biblical World*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1910), 93-100.

¹⁷⁸ Vööbus, A., *Asceticism*, 62-63.

¹⁷⁹ Vööbus, A., *Asceticism*, 63.

¹⁸⁰ Charlesworth, J.H., “Qumran, John and the Odes of Solomon,” in J.H. Charlesworth, Ed., *John and Qumran* (London, 1972), 107-136.

evidence.¹⁸¹ Then, of course, there are those that attribute the text to Edessa.¹⁸² However, I think Murray's caution carries the day: "but when all is said, the *Odes* resist all systematization and it is not certain where in Christian tradition they are to be located."¹⁸³ I find no definitive evidence for the *Odes* deriving from either Antioch or Edessa, but I do think, given the extant Syriac versions that we have, that the text at least certainly circulated in the Syrian milieu. Moreover, I do think that the text evinces some of the major thematic interest of early Syrian Christianity, namely: virginity,¹⁸⁴ intoxication by the 'living waters,'¹⁸⁵ the Garden of Eden,¹⁸⁶ spiritual and fleshly garments,¹⁸⁷ God's rest,¹⁸⁸ and perfection,¹⁸⁹ amongst others.

Acts of Thomas

Edessa, the great pearl of Syria, has long been associated with the Apostle Judas Thomas and his work in the greater Syrian Orient and beyond in Parthia and India. It is there (in the modern city of Şanlıurfa) that a small group of Syriac Christians keep his memory

¹⁸¹ Grant, R.M., "The Odes of Solomon and the Church of Antioch," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944), 363-377.

¹⁸² Drijvers, H.J.W., "Edessa und das Jüdische Christentum," *Vigilae Christianae* 24 (1970), 4-33.

¹⁸³ Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 25.

¹⁸⁴ A. Vööbus concludes that, "The 'Odes of Solomon' offer some unmistakable allusions to the intimate fusion between the Christian message and the proclamation of virginity." Vööbus, A., *Asceticism*, 63.

¹⁸⁵ *Ode* 7, lines 7-8: "And so I drank and became intoxicated, from the living water that does not die. And my intoxication did not cause ignorance, but I abandoned vanity..." J.H. Charlesworth's translation.

¹⁸⁶ *Ode* 20, line 7: "But put on the grace of the Lord generously, and come to His Paradise, and make for yourself a garland from His tree." J.H. Charlesworth's translation.

¹⁸⁷ *Ode* 25, line 8: "And I was covered with the covering of Your Spirit, and I removed from me my garments of skin." J.H. Charlesworth's translation.

¹⁸⁸ *Ode* 20, line 8: "Then put it on your head and be joyful, and recline upon His rest." J.H. Charlesworth's translation.

¹⁸⁹ *Ode* 26, line 7: "Even from the crest of the summits and unto their extremity is His perfection." J.H. Charlesworth's translation.

alive. The *Acts of Thomas*¹⁹⁰ represents the pinnacle of three centuries of Syrian Christian thought and experimentation. In this fanciful and romantic narrative the great Apostle to Syria heals numerous people, exhorts them to a life of chastity, builds 'palaces' for the poor, interrupts weddings, and gets confused with Jesus. It represents the culmination of the Thomas tradition (i.e. *Gospel of Thomas* and *Book of Thomas*) while integrating themes and traditions from the broader Christian world.

Our earliest record of a collection of 'acts' of the Apostle of Thomas comes to us in Epiphanius' *Panairon*,¹⁹¹ which suggests a terminus for its composition in the early fourth century, though most scholars locate the text in the third century. A. Vööbus proposes that the *Acts* were:

probably composed in the first half of the third century. The place of origin is hinted at in the Acts. For in telling us that one of the disciples of Thomas had brought his body to the West, the author inadvertently reveals it. It must have been east of Edessa for the remains of Thomas were supposed to rest in Edessa.

The *Acts of Thomas* exists in both Greek and Syriac versions. There exists a generally agreed upon Syrian provenance with a clear relationship to early Syrian theology and the broader Thomas tradition (which will be explored in chapter three).

The text consists of thirteen narrative components, referred to as 'acts,' and two major poetic or hymnic portions (i.e. the *Hymn of the Pearl* and the *Hymn of the Bride*). Thematically, it preaches virginity and celibacy as *requirements* for both baptism and the Christian life as a

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Klijn, A.F.J., "The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Jun., 1983), 193-199.

¹⁹¹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 47.1 and 60.1.5.

whole.¹⁹² Marriage, in the *Acts*, is entirely bad, as is intercourse. *To be a Christian, in the Acts, is to be an ascetic celibate*: this is the primary concern and message of the *Acts of Thomas*.

The Gospel of Thomas

Because this text is the major focus of this dissertation, I will only offer the briefest of descriptions in the present case; the more detailed analysis will be provided in the chapters that follow. The *Gospel of Thomas* exists in both Greek and Coptic forms. It consists (in the Coptic version) of 114 logia or sayings complexes. The three Greek fragments (i.e. POxy 1, POxy 654, POxy 655) were discovered in 1897 and 1903 in Oxyrhynchus, Upper Egypt.¹⁹³ The fragments date between 130-240 C.E. If we can trust the early second century date of these fragments, then these *Thomas* fragments participate in the earliest extant records of Christian texts.¹⁹⁴ Whatever the case, these fragments of *Thomas* clearly derive from a formative period in Christian history.

¹⁹² Cf. Vööbus, A., *Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951).

¹⁹³ Cf. Evelyn-White, H., *The Sayings of Jesus From Oxyrhynchus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920); Fitzmeyer, J.A. "The Oxyrhynchus Logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel According to Thomas.," 355-433 in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971); Attridge, H.W. "Appendix: The Greek Fragments" in: *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7 Together With XIII, 2*, BRIT. LIB. OR. 4926(1), and pOxy. I, 654, 655*, ed., B. Layton. Vol. 1. (New York: Brill, 1989).

¹⁹⁴ Cf. J. Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts* (1974); B.M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* (1981); Cobern, C.M., The oldest leaf of the New Testament, *Biblia* 10, 1897-98, 255-257; Cobern, C.M., The recently discovered "sayings of Christ" and the oldest leaf of the New Testament, *Homiletic Review* 34, 1897, 505-510; Cotton, J.S., Greek papyri from Egypt, *Biblia* 10, 6, 1897, 153-159; Cullmann, O., The Gospel of Thomas and the problem of the age of the tradition contained therein: A survey, *Interpretation* 16, 1962, 418-438; Deissmann, A., On the text of the second logia fragment from Oxyrhynchus, in: *Light from the ancient east*, London, 1910, 436-440; Filson, F.V., New Greek and Coptic gospel manuscripts, *Biblical Archaeologist* 24, 1961, 2-18; Fitzmyer, J.A., The Oxyrhynchus logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel according to Thomas, *Theological Studies* 20, 1959, 505-560. Garitte, G., Les "Logoi" d'Oxyrhynque et l'apocryphe copte dit "évangile de Thomas", *Le Muséon* 73, 1960, 151-172; Garitte, G., Les "logoi" d'Oxyrhynque sont traduits du copte, *Le Muséon* 73, 1960, 335-349; Garofalo, S., Das Thomasevangelium ist kein Evangelium: Der Chenoboskionfund als Quelle zur Erforschung der Gnosis, *Wort und Wahrheit* 15, 1960, 364-371; Grenfell, B.P., and Hunt, A.S., *Logia Iesou: Sayings of our Lord from an early Greek papyrus*, Henry Frowde, London, 1897; Grenfell, B.P., and Hunt, A.S., *New sayings of Jesus and fragment of a lost gospel from Oxyrhynchus*, Henry Frowde, New York, 1903; Guillaumont, A., Les "Logia" d'Oxyrhynchos sont-ils traduits du copte?, *Le Muséon* 73, 1960, 325-333.

In 1945 a collection of twelve codices were discovered in modern Nag Hammadi (ancient Chenoboskion) in Upper Egypt near one of the founding centers of Pachomian cenobitic monasticism by one Muhammed Ali Samman. Included in these codices were fifty-two treatises, some of which were familiar (e.g. portions of Plato's *Republic*, the *Sentences of Sextus*, *Pistis Sophia*) and many others which were previously unknown (e.g. *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, etc.). The cartonnage of the codices suggest a transcription date around the end of the third century or early fourth century C.E. It has been generally accepted that the *Gospel of Thomas* participates in two very important formative eras in Christian origins: the Synoptic period and the Johannine period. Moreover, the *Gospel of Thomas* has commanded a scholarly consensus regarding its Syrian provenance, specifically within the environs of Edessa.

The Book of Thomas the Contender Writing to the Perfect

Another important source for Syrian Christian origins comes to us in the *Book of Thomas the Contender* (literally: *Athlete*) *Writing to the Perfect*.¹⁹⁵ This text was also discovered in Nag Hammadi along with the *Gospel of Thomas*. The *Book of Thomas* presents what is clearly a composite text comprised of a dialogue between the risen Jesus and his disciple Thomas, and a series of judgment sayings where Jesus speaks virtually alone. H. Schenke held that the underlying source for the *Book of Thomas* was a non-Christian Hellenistic Jewish sophic (wisdom) discourse treatise. Strangely, H. Schenke attributed this formative stratum to an apocryphal epistle by the Jewish patriarch 'Jacob' who was the 'athlete' or 'contender' writing to the Perfect Jewish ascetics. However, there is, in my estimation, no evidence for

¹⁹⁵ The most important study on this text (and one of the only ones) is J. Turner's *The Book of Thomas the Contender from Codex II of the Cairo Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi (CG II, 7): The Coptic Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Missoula, MT: Scholar's Press, 1975). This study is invaluable.

this conjecture. H. Schenke further postulated that this originally Jewish text was Christianized, through the characters of Jesus and Thomas, as a gnostic dialogue. Yet, there is nothing in this text that appears to be definitively 'Jewish' in regard to identity markers: there is no mention of circumcision, Sabbath, etc. Thus to assume later Christianization of the text is, in my estimation, baseless. For H. Schenke the dialogue components of the text are secondary expansions by a later Christian editor, whereas I would consider the dialogue components formative and the discourse material towards the end of the text, secondary. H. Schenke's theory, though certainly imaginative, moves far beyond the evidence at hand. There exists no such non-Christian Hellenistic Jewish wisdom treatise attributed to the patriarch Jacob, nor is there any evidence to suggest that the character of Thomas replaced an earlier non-Christian character.

I find J. Turner's thesis much more persuasive, which I will quote at length:

The earlier theory, developed by the author of this article, began from the observation that the actual dialogue between Thomas and Jesus occupies only the first three fifths of the treatise (NHC II, 138:4-142:21), while the remaining two fifths (NHC II, 142:21-end) actually constitutes a long monologue of the Savior, in which Thomas no longer plays a role. This and the detection of a transitional editorial seam at 142:21 suggest that Thom. Cont. could have been compiled by a redactor from two separate works, the first three fifths from a dialogue between Thomas and Jesus, perhaps entitled the "Book of Thomas the Contender Writing to the Perfect," and the second two fifths from a collection of sayings of the Savior gathered into a homiletical discourse perhaps entitled "The Hidden Words Which the Savior Spoke, Which I Recorded, Even I, Mathaias." A redactor later prefixed the dialogue to the sayings collection, prefaced the whole with the present opening lines augmented by the reference to Thomas as the recipient of the secret words and Mathaias as the scribe, but then appended a subscript title designating Thomas as the author of the whole. In its original form, the last two fifths would have existed as a late and decadent reflection of the literary genre of the sayings of Jesus, in which the original sayings have been so expanded with interpretation that the original saying has been all but obliterated, leaving only vestigial Jesuanic formulas such as "Amen I say to you," "blessed are you who...", "woe to you," "watch and pray," and one instance of a parable (144:21-36). On this hypothesis, Thom. Cont. fits into a natural interpretive development of the sayings of Jesus: original, relatively

unadulterated collections of Jesus' sayings were gradually collected and expanded by means of interpretive material as in Q (the Gospel Source) or the Gospel of Thomas, and then later embedded in a larger interpretive frame story such as a postresurrection dialogue or a life-of-Jesus gospel concluding with a passion or resurrection narrative.¹⁹⁶

Turner's theory has much to commend it. I agree with his identification of a redactional seam between the first three-fifths of the text (characterized by a dialogue between Jesus and Thomas) and the last two-fifths (characterized by a series of woes and a judgment oriented Jesus speech). Though Turner's theory concerning the alternative titles of the two main pieces of the text hold promise, I do not think we have enough evidence to propose such with any certainty. However, Turner's proposed trajectory from sayings to dialogues or narrative gospel, I think, does find a rather noncontroversial piece of evidence in the relationship between the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Thomas*.

Because I consider the first two-fifths of the text to be a commentary of sorts on the first three logia in the *Gospel of Thomas*,¹⁹⁷ I believe the *Book of Thomas* is later than the *Gospel of Thomas*. The rather undeveloped dialogue structure and less complex themes suggests a mid to late second century date for the complete text. However, because the dialogue stratum appears to be earlier than the final monologue-like discourse of Jesus, I think we can push the formative dialogue stratum back into the early second century.

Beyond the literary features of the *Book of Thomas*, there exist a number of important thematic parallels with other Syrian texts, which strongly suggest a Syrian provenance. These themes include the condemnation of marriage, sexual intercourse, eating meat, while also advocating the 'single life,' perfection, knowledge of the self (Cf. *Thomas* 3), and an interest in

¹⁹⁶ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, p. 530.

¹⁹⁷ See chapter three of the present work.

overcoming the material condition (Cf. *Thomas* 29). This text certainly belongs in the Syrian orbit. It equates the Christian life with celibacy, vegetarianism, perfection, and asceticism. More will be said about the relationship between this text and *Thomas* in chapter three.

The Dialogue of the Savior

Another text that also, at times, operates as a commentary on the *Gospel of Thomas* tradition is the *Dialogue of the Savior*, which may suggest a date somewhere in the second century.¹⁹⁸ It was found, like the *Book of Thomas*, among the codices discovered in the Nag Hammadi cache. This text, again like the *Book of Thomas*, is clearly composite and makes use of the title 'savior' for Jesus. H. Koester and E. Pagels were the first to consider the text as part of a baptismal initiation,¹⁹⁹ and though this possibility certainly has promise, it is by no means certain. Baptism is referred to only tangentially and the text as a whole is only marginally related to later baptismal initiation texts. H. Koester and E. Pagels note that the *Dialogue of the Savior*, like the *Book of Thomas*, contains an earlier dialogue stratum or core:

The title *The Dialogue of the Savior* occurs in the *incipit* (120:1) and in the *explicit* (147:23). But the work begins with an address of the Savior to his disciples that does not show any trace of the dialogue scheme (*Dial. Sav.* 1-3 [120:3-124:22]). However, the main source used by the author (first appearing in 4 [124:23]...) is characterized by dialogues between Jesus and his disciples, of whom Judas, Matthew, and Mary are frequently named explicitly. Thus, the title *Dialogue* may derive from this main source. On the other hand, the designation "Savior"

¹⁹⁸ See these important studies: Hills, J.V., "The Three 'Matthean' Aphorisms in the 'Dialogue of the Savior' 53," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (1991), 43-58; DeConick, A.D., "The 'Dialogue of the Savior' and the Mystical Sayings of Jesus," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (1996), 178-199.

¹⁹⁹ "The introduction places the themes of that earlier dialogue into a new context: baptismal initiation. Thus, the opening instruction invites the believer to baptism, relating the ritual act to the metaphysical symbolism he finds in his dialogue source. Parallels to such a theological endeavor occur in Ephesians, Hebrews, I Peter, *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, and *The Gospel of Philip*." Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels' Introduction to Stephen Emmels' translation of the *Dialogue of the Savior* in Stephen Emmel, Ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 11.

is almost completely restricted to passages composed by the final author, whereas the dialogue sections use the designation "Lord."²⁰⁰

E. Pagels and H. Koester tentatively divide the different sources for the *Dialogue of the Savior* as follows:

Incipit -- Title
1-3 -- Introduction
4-14 -- Dialogue, part I
15-18 -- Creation myth
19-20 -- Dialogue, part II
21-24 -- Creation myth, continued
25-34a -- Dialogue, part III
34b-35 -- Wisdom list
36-40 -- Apocalyptic vision
41-104a -- Dialogue, part IV
104b -- Concluding instructions
Explicit -- Title²⁰¹

R. Cameron also agrees that the *Dialogue of the Savior* is a composite. He argues that the document can be divided into at least three sources. The first is a series of long dialogue speeches, joined by theme, style, and subject matter. The second is characterized by small mythological complexes that interrupt the flow of the formative dialogue stratum. The third source, who is probably the final compiler of the complete text, is evinced in the abrupt shifts in theme and hermeneutical interest.²⁰² R. Cameron's division of the sources is relatively close to that of H. Koester's and E. Pagels':

Into this dialogue are inserted the following sources: (1) a creation myth (127.23-131.15) based on Genesis 1-2; (2) a cosmological list (133.16-134.24) interpreted in the wisdom tradition; and (3) a fragment of an apocalyptic vision (134.24-137.3). The final redactor has introduced the entire document with (4) an exhortation, prayer, and typically gnostic instruction about the passage of the soul through the heavens (120.2-124.22), all of which is described in terms

²⁰⁰ H. Koester and E. Pagels' Introduction to S. Emmels' translation of the *Dialogue of the Savior* in S. Emmels, Ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex III, 5: The Dialogue of the Savior* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 1.

²⁰¹ Adapted from *Ibid.*, 2. I have elected to exempt the cumbersome citation of codex, tractate, page, and line.

²⁰² Cameron, R., ed., *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1982), 38.

closely related to the language of the deuterio-Pauline corpus, upon which the introductory second may well be dependent.²⁰³

Beyond the source discussion there has also developed a consensus around the *Dialogue of the Savior's* relationship to the Gospel of John. R. Cameron suggests that, "Its use of sayings to compose dialogues marks a stage in the development of the tradition leading from the primitive collection of sayings to the creation of longer revelation discourses and dialogues."²⁰⁴ Because of this theoretical development in Gospel traditions, R. Cameron argues that the *Dialogue of the Savior* was a "precursor of the Gospel of John."²⁰⁵ R. Cameron sees in the *Dialogue of the Savior* the beginning of the negotiation between and integration of realized and futuristic eschatology. Though this is possible, the *Dialogue of the Savior* is not unique in this regard; indeed, the Apostle Paul had already negotiated the notion of the 'already not yet' of the Kingdom of God. E. Pagels and H. Koester also argue that the *Dialogue of the Savior* is "less advanced and theologically less complex than the Johannine parallels"²⁰⁶ -- and therefore earlier. However, lack of complexity need not suggest de facto that a tradition is earlier. There are three reasons to place the *Dialogue of Savior* in the early second century: first, it comments on *Gospel of Thomas* tradition, which is Syrian; second, it parallels many of the Syrian Christian spiritual themes, such as the Garden of Eden as the Kingdom, the exhortation to rest, the scandal of the body, the prohibition of women, and virginity; third, the dialogue stratum's awareness of the broader Jesus tradition (*Matthew* particularly) but without evidence of

²⁰³ Cameron, R., *The Other Gospels*, 38-39.

²⁰⁴ Cameron, R., *The Other Gospels*, 38-39.

²⁰⁵ Cameron, R., *The Other Gospels*, 39.

²⁰⁶ H. Koester and E. Pagels' Introduction to S. Emmels' translation of the *Dialogue of the Savior* in S. Emmels, Ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984).

literary dependence suggests a date before the *Gospel of Matthew* had made significant inroads in Syria. This text will be treated in detail in chapter three.

The Gospel of Philip

The *Gospel of Philip* is the first *Christian* text, at least that I am aware of, to use the term “Syriac,” which may suggest that it was penned in a Syriac-speaking region. Given its concern for Syriac and Greek meanings of particular words, it seems quite likely that the text derives from a milieu that used both Syriac and Greek. Some scholars assume that this suggests Edessa as the city of origin for the *Gospel of Philip*, but I don’t think there is nearly enough evidence to consider Edessa anything beyond a possibility. The *Gospel of Philip*, like the *Gospel of Thomas*, presents an apparently orderless collage of sayings, parables, and discourse material. However, when one reads carefully, especially in Coptic, a variety of intriguing literary structures emerge. The *Gospel of Philip*, contrary to early opinion, does have an order. Unfortunately for the *Gospel of Philip*, scholars have often fallen prey to the heresiological tendency to attribute *every* difference to one specific person: in this case Valentinus. Consider B. Layton’s opening remarks on the *Gospel of Philip*:

The work called *The Gospel According to Philip* is a Valentinian anthology containing some one hundred short excerpts taken from various other works. None of the sources of these excerpts have been identified, and apparently they do not survive. To judge from their style and contents, they were sermons, treatises, or philosophical epistles (typical Valentinian genres), as well as collected aphorisms or short dialogues with comments. Only some of the sources can definitely be identified as Valentinian. Because of their brevity and the lack of context it is difficult to assign any of them to particular schools of Valentinian theology. On the other hand, nothing indicates that all come from one and the same branch of the Valentinian church. It is possible that some of the excerpts are by Valentinus himself. Others, however, refer to etymologies in Syriac, the Semitic language (a dialect of Aramaic) used in Edessa and western Mesopotamia; these must be the work of a Valentinian theologian of the East,

writing in a bilingual milieu such as Edessa... Probably the language of composition of all the excerpts was Greek.²⁰⁷

B. Layton seems to suggest that Valentinus is indeed the font from which *all* similar 'Christian-gnostic' or biblical demiurgical perspectives emerged. We encountered the same sentiments in regard to Quq and Quqites. But, *parallels do not require us to assume derivation*. In this case, just because the *Gospel of Philip* parallels some of the Valentinian positions we need not assume that he stands at the beginning of this trajectory. What if the collector of the *Gospel of Philip* appreciated various sayings related to Valentinus' system, but neither *adhered* to Valentinus' entire system, nor even knew anything of him? This seems to me a more cautious perspective on the Valentinian-like material circulating in the literary-philosophical world of the collector of the *Gospel of Philip*. Even though I will identify a number of themes in this chapter as 'early Syrian,' this is different from attributing everything to one individual (or school). Yes, Valentinus did have a school in Rome, but Rome is not Edessa. To assume that Valentinus is responsible for everything similar in Syria cannot be substantiated. Again, parallels do not require us to assume derivation.

M. Turner's pioneering work on the *Gospel of Philip*²⁰⁸ takes a similar position regarding the diversity of sources and opinions in the text, which I will quote at length:

The evidence surveyed in this volume suggests that, like the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* in several respects, the *Gospel according to Philip* is an assemblage of materials from multiple sources. One major difference is the *Gospel according to Philip* has been edited in accordance with some of the principles which were common to published collections of excerpts in late antiquity. A more important difference between the two documents, however, lies in their attitudes toward the material included. Clement mostly excerpted material with which he disagreed, and which he intended to refute, as his interspersed comments make clear. A smaller

²⁰⁷ Layton, B., *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 325.

²⁰⁸ Turner, M. L., *The Gospel According to Philip: The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

amount of Clement's material, on the other hand, seems to have been collected with the intention of borrowing or adapting it to his own thought, perhaps the better to persuade those familiar with gnostic ideas. The collector of the *Gospel according to Philip*, in contrast, seems to have had little or no interest in refuting the material collected: while he or she could hardly have agreed with every opinion expressed, each excerpt seems to have been selected for its positive value.²⁰⁹

M. Turner concludes with an admittedly "conjectural," though I think persuasive, description of the collector of the *Gospel of Philip's* intentions:

The document is a tinker's collection of odds and ends, an assortment of texts that might come in handy in gnostic *bricolage*. That is, it is composed of passages provocative of new insights and approaches, raw materials for possible syntheses. Nevertheless, it is not an indiscriminating collection of junk: its materials are ones which might come in handy for a very specific task... The gathering together of these passages formed a new context, however, in which passages could reverberate off each other. Interests and questions from material derived from one source could easily be read into material from another. Some redactional juxtapositions actively encourage new readings. That is, the assembly of such a collection makes -- almost forces -- a somewhat violent re-reading of its component excerpts. Placed together like this, very many passages in the *Gospel according to Philip* can be read as circling around the theme of modes of existence. In good gnostic fashion, these are reflections of each other on different levels; by assembling them, our collector was toying with the possibility that they could interpret each other.²¹⁰

Beyond the traditional 'gnostic' accusations, M. Turner presents what I think is indeed the rationale behind the collection. This collection, which almost surely derives from a Syrian milieu, presents a collection of material juxtaposed in such a manner that invites new and experimental meanings. One of these diverse sources was the *Gospel of Thomas*. Consider the following two performancial variations in the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Gospel of Thomas*:

Gospel of Philip 43: The Lord said, "Blessed is he who is before he came into being. For he who is, has been and shall be."

²⁰⁹ *Ibīd.*, 258.

²¹⁰ *Ibīd.*, 259.

Thomas 19.1 Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who came into being from the beginning, before he came to be."²¹¹

Gospel of Philip 54: The Lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and a redemption and a bridal chamber. [...] he said, "*I came to make the things below like the things above, and the things outside like those inside.*" I came to unite them in the place." [...] here through types [...] and images.

Thomas 22.3a: Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below."

Beyond these two direct parallels there exist a number of sayings that share the concerns of the *Gospel of Thomas*. In this respect, the *Gospel of Philip* shares many of the same referential meaning-making matrices but not necessarily the same content. Overall, the *Gospel of Philip* is not dependent on the *Gospel of Thomas*, but it certainly demonstrates that it is comfortable in the milieu set by the major redaction material, which will be outlined and identified in the Appendix to this dissertation.

The Book of Steps

This source, which is often referred to by its Latin name, the *Liber Graduum*, consists of thirty mēmre, or spiritual discourses. The text probably derives from the early to mid fourth century. Its thirty mēmre may have been composed over a period of time by a number of different authors in response to various controversies that arose.²¹² The text describes two

²¹¹ M. Turner makes a similar observation:

Jesus said, "Blessed is that which existed before coming into being."

In the Gospel according to Philip the core statement appears in a slightly elaborated form, but is not visibly connected with the material which surrounds it, nor does that material bear any resemblance to the surrounding material in the Gospel according to Thomas.

43. The Lord said, "Blessed is he who is before he came into being. For he who is, has been and shall be."

Here, the statement, has been extended by an explanatory clause reminiscent of Rev 1:8. Beyond pointing to the existence of a "Thomas" strand among the traditions in the Gospel according to Philip, we learn that this strand of tradition has been refracted through the prism of scriptural -- or perhaps liturgical -- phraseology. *Ibid.*, 207.

²¹² Kitchen, R.A. and M.F.G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004), from the Introduction, xxix.

paths within the Christian experience and Church: the way of the Perfect and the Upright. The 'Upright' were those who, like the wider deaconate, provided for the material needs of the Christian community including almsgiving, visiting the sick, clothing the naked, and attending to the widows. Unlike the Perfect they were permitted to engage in business and dealing, but were strictly warned against engaging in any sort of swindling or usury. The 'Perfect,' on the other hand, strictly forbade any involvement in 'worldly' activities and embraced strict forms of asceticism including a vow of both poverty and celibacy. The Perfect lived a life of dependency on God and their brethren among the Upright to support them. They were 'strangers' to the world who lived a life of unceasing prayer. The Perfect were the heart of the Church within the church. They were the charismatic and holy ones, the spiritual athletes. They did not 'labor' in the world, but they did labor beyond the world on behalf of their constituents among the Upright and the faithful.

The *Book of Steps* concerns 'steps' or 'grades' along the road to Perfection. The writing suggests that there was a rift within the community between the Perfect and the Upright. In the *Book of Thomas* the Perfect were the *only* Christians, but by the fourth century with the *Book of Steps*, room was made for practicality. However, this negotiated agreement between the Perfect and the Upright seems to have broken down during the time that these mēm̐rē were collected. The Perfect are primarily the ones writing, and they appear to be on the defensive, arguing for a way of life that was waning. The beginning of the end may have been the so-called 'Messalian' controversy. This mid to late fourth century controversy, deriving from the word 'meṣalleyānē,' which in Syriac means 'those given to prayer,' allegedly denied the need for the Mysteries (i.e. Sacraments) of the Church, taught that the devil and the Holy Spirit mutually dwelt in the heart of the believer, and that only constant prayer that could overcome

this condition. C. Stewart's masterful study on this subject, however, shows that this was never a 'movement' as such, but, rather, a miscommunication between Syriac spirituality and discipline and the broader Byzantine model of monasticism.²¹³

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is the *Book of Steps*' parallels with the Thomasine²¹⁴ and broader Syrian interest in returning to Eden *as the way* to the Kingdom of God that are important. This is a most prominent theme in both the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Steps*. This source also sheds light on the trajectory of the Perfect that were introduced in the *Book of Thomas*. Though the *Book of Steps* is much later than the first two centuries of Syrian Christian history, its continuity with the Thomas tradition suggests that it preserves some developments of early tradition: namely, the concern for virginity, renunciation, the first creation in Genesis 1 as the Kingdom, and the reign of the Perfect ones.

The Pseudo-Macarian Corpus

The inner spiritual combat of the Christian athlete in the *Book of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and the *Book of Steps* is given its most thorough and compelling presentation in the works of Macarius the Great of Syria. It is now generally agreed that the name Macarius the Great of Egypt is a pseudonym for an anonymous writer and spiritual master in Syria, hence the term 'Pseudo-Macarius.' Among the works that have survived are *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies* and *The Great Letter*. There are a number of near verbatim and distant parallels to the Thomas tradition.²¹⁵ Pseudo-Macarius, like the author(s) of the *Book of Steps*, has received his

²¹³ Stewart, C., *'Working the Earth of the Heart': The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

²¹⁴ Baker, A., "Gospel of Thomas and the Syriac Liber Graduum," *New Testament Studies* 12, 1965, 49-55.

²¹⁵ Cf. Baker, A., "Pseudo-Macarius and the Gospel of Thomas," *Vigiliae Christianae* 18, 1964, 215-225; Quispel, G., "The Syrian Thomas and the Syrian Macarius," *Vigiliae Christianae* 18, 1964, 226-235.

fair share of charges of Messalianism, though this charge is, for the most part, a stretch at best. Like the *Book of Steps*, Pseudo-Macarius exhorts his monastic readership to renounce the world, fight the sin lodged within, and become perfect through constant prayer. This source helps make the case for the Syrian provenance of the *Gospel of Thomas* because of the quotes and allusions contained within the corpus.

The Manichaean Psalm Book and the Psalms of Thomas

When it was discovered that Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, was part of a Jewish 'baptismal' group associated with the Elkesites and that there are a number of significant parallel traditions from the Thomas and greater Syrian Christian tradition, there developed a need to take seriously the influence of this tradition in early Syrian Christianity.²¹⁶ In the context of this dissertation, however, I am interested only in the literary parallels with the Thomas tradition rather than the history of Manichaeism. The *Manichaean Psalm Book* published by C. Allberry, contains a number of parallels to the *Gospel of Thomas* as well as a set of psalms attributed to Thomas. Most of these texts date to the late second and third centuries C.E.

Aphrahat the Persian

This very important saint in the Syrian Orthodox Church is responsible for the *Demonstrations*, which were a series of twenty-three dialogues and discourses on the ascetical life. Next to nothing is known about his life except that he was a 'Persian' and may have lived in a monastery near Mosul, now modern Iraq. His *Demonstrations* can be dated to 337 C.E. and 344 C.E.²¹⁷ This source takes us far afloat from the first two centuries of Christianity in

²¹⁶ Cf. Hammerschmidt, E., *Das Thomasevangelium und die Manichäer, Oriens Christianus* 46, 1958, 120-123.

²¹⁷ Cf. Higgins, M.J., "Aphraates' Dates for the Persian Persecution," *BZ* 44 (1951), 264-271.

Syria, but the parallels in the Thomas tradition and his presumably being a part of the *benai qeiamā*, the 'sons of the covenant,' mark him as an important source for Christianity in Syria in the preceding century.

Ephrem the Syrian

St. Ephrem the Syrian was by far the most significant and influential theologian in Syrian Christian history. His hymns remain the lifeblood of the Syriac Church today. He was originally from the Persian city of Nisibis (ca. 306) but moved to Edessa when Rome lost control of Nisibis. Though he is far from the first two centuries of Syrian Christianity, he unintentionally provides us much important information. As mentioned above, he shows us the popularity of the Marcionites, the followers of Bardaisan, and Tatian by responding to the former two and writing a commentary on the latter's great work. He was the champion of Nicene theology, and by being such he exhibited (accidentally) his minority status in fourth century Edessa. It is important to note, for our purposes, that he considered the Apostle Thomas *as the* apostle to Edessa, and a saint.

The Character and Ethos of Syrian Christianity in the First Two Centuries

How, then, does one sum up the character and ethos of the religious spirit in the Osrhoene and the wider Syrian Orient in the first two centuries of the common era? We can conclude with the following thematic propositions that I think capture most of the Syrian Christian experiment:

(1) *Life in the material condition is problematic and needs to be overcome.* This theme stands at the very center of Syrian Christian spirituality. It is the font from which all of its diverse forms of asceticism derive. Beyond the typical notions of asceticism and its reasons, the lesson of Syrian Christianity is that humanity's problem was once God's problem. This is demonstrated

in both the Quqite myth with God's emergence from the wakeful sea and accidentally producing materiality and Tatian's interpretation of God's statement in Genesis 1 -- "Let there be light!" -- as prayer for God's own emergence and creation. The *Dialogue of the Savior* echoes this notion of emergence in Jesus' words:

51. Judas said, "How will our garments be brought to us?"

52. The Lord said, "There are some who will provide for you, and there are others who will receive [...]. For it is they who will give you your garments. For who will be able to reach that place which is the reward? But the garments of life were given to man because he knows the path by which he will leave. *And it is difficult even for me to reach it!*"²¹⁸

The garments mentioned above are those material garments that were donned after the 'Fall' in the Garden of Eden. In Syrian Christianity, there is a great emphasis in removing the earthly garments through severe asceticism so that one might ascend to the realm of Spirit where God dwells, as in the Quqite myth. Jesus, as the Savior, provided this path, but it was difficult even for him "to reach it." One must overcome the earthly material condition.

(2) *One must avoid carnal behavior by avoiding meat and wine.* This theme finds near unanimous attestation in the earliest Syrian Christian sources. Both the Marcionites and the followers of Tatian rejected the 'carnal' behavior of the animals by prohibiting meat and wine.²¹⁹ The Quqites also exhibit this tendency when they avoided touching corpses. The Thomas tradition's adherence to this principle is also quite pronounced.

(3) *One should embrace celibacy or remain a virgin for life.* Virginité and celibacy were synonymous with the Gospel in Syria; indeed it was *the* message of Christianity. We see this in almost all of our sources. From the Orthodox voices (Ephrem and Aphrahat) to Marcion to the *Acts of Thomas* it is present. Celibacy was also a *requirement* for baptism in Aphrahat's community as

²¹⁸ S. Emmels' translation. Emphasis mine.

²¹⁹ It is worth noting that the word 'wine' does not show up anywhere in Tatian's *Diatessaron*.

well as Marcion's and the community represented in the *Book of Thomas the Contender*.²²⁰ Intercourse, it was believed, was of the same nature as the animals that ate each other and reproduced. Because the Syrian saints were yearning to participate in the life of the angels, they thought it necessary to reject the 'deed of shame.'

(4) *One must become a solitary one.* The Syrian spiritual landscape was dominated by the *ihīdāyā*, the 'single ones.' In the *Gospel of Thomas* this is referred to in the Coptic as either ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ, meaning 'one alone,' or ΜΟΝΟΧΟC, 'an alone one.'²²¹ In Syriac, *ihīdāyā* can imply a singleness of mind (on Christ or the Kingdom), genderlessness, exclusivity (i.e. leaving one's family as Jesus did), a close relationship to Christ's 'only-begotten-ness' (i.e. μονογενής), or as Mani used it, to proclaim himself as the *only* Mani. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ usually implies the erasure of gendered existence (e.g. *Thomas* 22: "make the two one") and ΜΟΝΟΧΟC as the condition of being an 'alone one.'

The *Gospel of Thomas*' usage, if it indeed represents our earliest recorded translation of this tradition, implies that the term *ihīdāyā* was initially concerned with a genderless and chaste way of life. The life of celibacy was inextricably interwoven with life as a 'solitary one.' The Syriac word for 'holiness,' *qaḏḏiūtā*, was synonymous with chastity and purity. One could become *qaḏḏi*, 'holy,' even if one was married if that one renounced sexual intercourse for life. But it was the true virtue of virginity that was reserved for those who had never partaken in the 'deed of shame,' who were referred to as *betūlūtā*. This distinction also demonstrates the Syrian Christian proclivity to introduce 'levels' within the Church. We see

²²⁰ See Vööbus, A., *Celibacy, a requirement for admission to baptism in the early Syrian church* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951).

²²¹ See Klijn, A.F.J., "The 'Single One' in the Gospel of Thomas," *Journal of Biblical Literature* No. 81 (1962), 271-278.

this in the distinction between the 'Upright' and 'Perfect' in the *Book of Steps* and the *Book of Thomas*. We also see it within the *qeiāmā* (a sort of church within the church) that Aphrahat refers to. This term may be rendered as 'ascetics' or 'monks.' A. Vööbus elects to render it as the 'sons (and/or daughters) of the covenant.' The root of the word 'qeiāmā' derives from a sense involving 'rising up' or 'standing.' In this sense the sons and daughters of the *qeiāmā* are those who 'stand together' in a vow or covenant. I think that because A. Vööbus saw (or wanted to see) a connection between earliest Syrian Christianity and the 'covenanters' in Qumran he chose to emphasize the covenantal associations -- but *Qumran is not that close to Edessa*. I think that the *Gospel of Thomas* is a better guide for the rendering of this term. For *Thomas*, *qeiāmā* (if it is related to ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ) seems to refer to a group of 'single ones' that have taken their stand in a vow (or covenant) together. In *Thomas* disciples 'take their stand in the beginning' (*Thomas* 19) and they are the 'solitary ones' that enter the Bridal Chamber of the Lord (*Thomas* 75) because they are from the Kingdom and to it they will return (*Thomas* 49). In *Thomas* the disciples are those that make 'the two one, so that the male is no longer male nor the female female' (*Thomas* 22). This genderless existence is part of the Syrian Christian ethos, and its earliest representation comes to us in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

(5) *One must join the divine Bridegroom in the Bridal Chamber*. It is no accident that the *Gospel of Thomas* associates virginity and genderlessness with the divine Bridal Chamber, which is the Kingdom of God. This is most clearly demonstrated in *Thomas* 75: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires (ΜΟΝΟΧΟΙ) are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber." This

tradition also plays very prominently in the *Gospel of Philip*.²²² This is also, at times, described as the heavenly image's reunification with the material image below. This is suggested in the *Acts of Thomas*, the Manichaean sources, and the Quqite sources most prominently. It is no surprise then that Tôma, which in Syriac means 'twin,' is used for the major Apostle to Syria.

(6) *One must overcome fate*. Both Bardaisan and the *Dialogue of the Savior* proclaim that fate (i.e. the course of the planets or the 'governors above'), though influential, can be overcome.

Consider *Dialogue of the Savior* 49-50:

49. Judas said, "Behold! The governors dwell above us, so it is they who will rule over us!"

50. The Lord said, "*It is you who will rule over them!* But when you rid yourselves of jealousy, then you will clothe yourselves in light and enter the bridal chamber."²²³

(7) *The Kingdom is in the Beginning; one must return there*. This theme, which is nearly universal in early Syrian Christianity, brings all of these disparate themes together. One must 'strip off the garment of the flesh' that Adam and Eve donned when they were cast out of the Garden, one must become like Adam and Eve and be genderless children, and one must be a virgin as they were. This theme runs throughout Syria and characterizes much of what I will identify as the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* in the Appendix to this dissertation. The Kingdom of God is in Eden, and it was the practice of Syrian asceticism that was intended to bring the initiate back there, so that they could eat of the Tree of Life and "*not experience death*" (*Thomas* 1). Eden was traditionally in Mesopotamia, but it was the Eden deep within the heart that the

²²² A. Vööbus in his review of the earliest sources for the study of Syriac Christianity mentioned a text he referred to as "A lost Syriac treatise in Greek." He wrote the following about it: "These facts are briefly these. The apparent Syriac cast of the document springs to the eye of the reader. Particularly the Christological terminology is conspicuous. The favorite term is that Christ is the Bridegroom, the veritable Bridegroom. All this thought-pattern has the same ring as the Syriac documents in which the message is focused in the Savior as the Bridegroom and salvation as the 'bridal chamber' -- terms which emerge surprisingly frequently here." (*Asceticism*, 66-69.)

²²³ S. Emmels' translation. Emphasis mine.

Syrian ascetic searched for. This was the glory to be recaptured. One did not look for the end of the world or the resurrection in early Syrian Christianity,²²⁴ but to the beginning.

²²⁴ Certainly the *Gospel of Thomas*, Bardaisan, and the Quqites proclaimed this.

Chapter Two

Previous Stratifications of the Gospel of Thomas

The *Gospel of Thomas* presents what appears to be an order-less collage of familiar and unfamiliar Jesus material. It is precisely this jarring juxtaposition of the familiar and the exotic that alerts one to the layered nature of the text. The sayings within the *Thomas* tradition exhibit different themes, but these themes are not randomly dispersed; they are, rather, sequenced in a manner that has later themes reinterpret earlier sayings (see the Appendix for a demonstration of this point). Anyone familiar with the presentation of Jesus' sayings in the Synoptic Gospel tradition²²⁵ and the hypothetical sayings-source behind them, referred to today as 'Q,'²²⁶ will recognize a significant number of parallels in the *Gospel of Thomas*. S. Patterson's work in his book, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, proved definitively that the Synoptic parallels in *Thomas* represent an independent tradition.²²⁷ If these sayings were to be considered mere copies from the Synoptic Gospel tradition, one would have to come up for a reason behind the decision to copy some sayings and leave out others. Moreover, one would need to make sense of the fact that there are Synoptic-like sayings and parables that are not in the canonical tradition. Finally, the juxtaposition of this Synoptic-like material with other more 'exotic' sayings traditions as well as thematic elaborative activity (as demonstrated in the Appendix) again suggests a layered text, rather than a haphazard random collection of sayings.

²²⁵ I.e., the *Gospel of Mark*, the *Gospel of Matthew*, and the *Gospel of Luke*.

²²⁶ I.e. the shared sayings material behind the Gospel's of *Matthew* and *Luke*.

²²⁷ See S.J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* chapters 1-3.

By J.D. Crossan's count, "28% (37 out of 132 units) of the *Gospel of Thomas* has parallels in the *Q Gospel*," while "37% (37 out of 101 units) of the *Q Gospel* has parallels in the *Gospel of Thomas*."²²⁸ If one doubts the existence of *Q*, Crossan's aforementioned count could be simply rephrased as agreement between Synoptic parallels and *Thomas* without the *Gospel of Mark*. Additionally, according to Crossan, "30% (11 out of 37 units) of what is common to the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Q Gospel* has parallels in Mark," while "17% (12 out of 64 units) of what is particular to the *Gospel of Thomas* has parallels in Mark."²²⁹ Given these impressive ratios of paralleled material, it seems right to assume *Thomas* represents an independent logion tradition alongside the canonical tradition. Yet, what is also striking in the *Gospel of Thomas* is its apparent relationship to the *Gospel of John*. The pioneering works of H. Koester,²³⁰ E. Pagels,²³¹ S. Davies,²³² and G. Riley²³³ have shown that there did indeed exist a relationship

²²⁸ Crossan, J.D., *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering what Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 248.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 248. Moreover, "19% (12 out of 64 units) of what is particular to the *Q Gospel* has parallels in Mark."

²³⁰ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 58, 1965, 279-318; Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, (SCM Press; Trinity Press International, London; Philadelphia, 1990); Koester, H., "Gnostic writings as witnesses for the development of the sayings tradition," in: B. Layton, ed., *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, 1980, 238-256; Koester, H., "Gnostic Sayings and Controversy Traditions in John 8:12-59," in: C. Hedrick, and R. Hodgson, eds., *Nag Hammadi, gnosticism*, 1986, 97-110; Koester, H., "La tradition Apostolique et les Origines du Gnosticisme," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 1, 1987, 1-16; Koester, H., "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," *Harvard Theological Review* 61, 1968, 203-247; Koester, H., "Q and its Relatives," in: J. Goehring, ed., *Gospel origins & Christian beginnings*, 1990, 49-63; Koester, H., "Three Thomas Parables," in: A. Logan, and A. Wedderburn, eds., *The New Testament and Gnosis*, 1983, 195- 203; Koester, H., and Patterson, S.J., *The Gospel of Thomas: Does it Contain Authentic Sayings of Jesus?*, *Bible Review* 6, 1990, 28-39.

²³¹ Pagels, E., *The Gnostic Gospels* (Vintage Books, 1979); Pagels, E., *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (Vintage Books, 2003); Pagels, E., "The Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospel of Thomas and John," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 118, No. 2 (1972), 153-169.

²³² Davies, S.L., "The Christology and Protology of the Gospel of Thomas," *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 111, No. 4 (1992), 663- 682.

²³³ Riley, G.J., *Doubting Thomas : Controversy between the communities of Thomas and John*, (Harvard University, 1990);

Riley, G.J., *Resurrection reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

between *Thomas* and *John*. According to Koester, “In several instances, John and Thomas interpret the same traditional saying, albeit with the use of quite different hermeneutic principles. Sayings about the life-giving power of the word(s) of Jesus appear in both gospels several times.”²³⁴ Consider some of these examples put forward by Koester²³⁵:

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Gospel of John</i>
1. And he said: “Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings will not experience death.”	8:51. Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.”
111.2 And the one who lives from the Living One will not see death.	8:52b. Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.
19.2 If you become my disciples and listen to my sayings, these stones will become your servants.	8:31b-32. If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.
13.1. I am not your teacher – you are drunk. Because you drank from the bubbling spring that I have measured out.	4:14. But those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.
108. Jesus said: “Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person.”	7:37-38. Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’
24.3 There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire world. 24.4 If that one does not shine, there is darkness.	11:9a-10. Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.
77.1. I am the light which is above them all, I am (the) all. (The) all has come forth from me, and (the) all has split open before me.	8:12. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.
19.1. Blessed is the one who came into being from the beginning, before he came to be.	8:58. Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.

²³⁴ Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 114.

²³⁵ The following is taken from Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 115-118, but supplied with my own translation of the Thomazine material with the Johannine material in the NRSV translation.

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Gospel of John</i>
<p>50.1 Jesus said: "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' Say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image.'</p> <p>50.2 If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living Father.'</p> <p>50.3 If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say, 'It is movement and repose.'"</p>	<p>8:14b. ...because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.</p> <p>1.9. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.</p>

Given the impressive parallels with both the Synoptic Gospel tradition and the Johannine tradition, as well as the unparalleled material, it seems right to assume that *Thomas* is a stratified document. W. Arnal in his comparison between *Thomas* and *Q* reaches a similar conclusion, which I will quote at length:

The Gospel of Thomas shows a considerable degree of formal and thematic inconsistency, which is one of the difficulties that prompted the redaction-critical studies of *Q*. Taken alone, this inconsistency suggests that the *Gospel of Thomas* is a composite, in that the traditions comprised in the document derive from various provenances. *This does not, however, suggest anything about the processes whereby these traditions were collected*, which is the critical literary question undergirding a comparison with *Q*. Several options present themselves, including unitary composition out of diverse oral traditions, desultory aggregation, and stratification. If either of the first two options applied to the *Gospel of Thomas*, one would expect a certain consistency, or evenness to the document. On the one hand, it would either bear the marks of a consistent and heavy-handed redaction, or reflect the consistent motifs of the oral tradition from which it drew, and thus be essentially coherent in terms of themes and forms; or, on the other hand, it would show a fairly evenly distributed lack of consistency in the weak hand of the redactor or in the variety of the oral tradition. In sharp contrast to either of these models, the stratification of the *Gospel of Thomas* would entail, as with *Q*, a pattern to the document's inconsistency; this inconsistency would be caused by the juxtaposition of two or more internally consistent bodies of material. In other words, the *Gospel of Thomas's* lack of formal and thematic unity would be manifested in the joining of distinct masses of consistent material. We would further expect that one of these bodies would show knowledge of, or interfere with, the other(s),

reflecting the imposition of a redactional perspective upon an already organized body of coherent material. This would indicate that the groups of material were not brought together at the same time. Of course, such a property would also allow scholars to determine the relative age of the strata.²³⁶

The Appendix to this dissertation will address the 'process' by which these different strata were incorporated into the *Gospel of Thomas*, and I refer the reader there after this chapter. The recognition of an inconsistency within the sayings themselves and their novel juxtapositions is what has alerted scholars to the stratified nature of *Thomas*. I should note that my interest in this chapter is not to recount the history of interpretation of the Gospel of Thomas. Our focus here is more precisely on the previous stratification theories.

G. Quispel: The Jewish-Christian and Three-Source Hypothesis

Long before Crossan hypothesized about two layers within the *Thomas* tradition (i.e. the sapiential and the 'gnostic'), it was G. Quispel that boldly set out in uncertain waters to trace the literary development and sources of the *Gospel of Thomas*.²³⁷ Quispel describes his first encounter with the complete *Gospel of Thomas* and his initial source theory as follows:

After our flight from Egypt in 1956, when at last we had managed to obtain a complete photocopy of the text and to make a provisional translation of the complete writing, the following hypothesis was launched by Quispel: the Gospel of Thomas found at Nag Hammadi is translated from the Greek. It contains 114 Sayings attributed to Jesus, and *therefore* is a collection of sayings, taken from the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel according to the Egyptians. Those taken from the former source, the Jewish-Christian source, have some affinities with the fragments preserved of the Jewish-Christian Gospels, with the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, with the

²³⁶ Arnal, W. E., "The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels," *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 88 No. 4 (1995), 471-494; 475-476. Emphasis mine.

²³⁷ See: G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament," *Vigiliae Christianae*, No. 11 (1957), 189-207; "Some Remarks on the Gospel of Thomas," *New Testament Studies* No. 5 (1958/1959), 276-290; "L'Evangile selon Thomas et les Clementines," *Vigiliae Christianae* No. 12 (1958), 181-196; "The 'Gospel of Thomas' and the 'Gospel of the Hebrews,'" *JVTS* No. 12 (1966), 371-382; And most importantly: "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," in *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica: Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel*, ed. J. Oort (Brill, 2008).

Diatessaron of Tatian and with the Western text of the New Testament Gospels. This was because the Jewish-Christian Gospel tradition had influenced the text of the Clementines, the *Diatessaron* and the Western texts.²³⁸

In this sense, *Thomas* was initially approached as a text not of its own, but as a compilation of other earlier texts. Quispel labors to inform readers that he does not claim that *Thomas* used Tatian's *Diatessaron* or that it was a Jewish-Christian Gospel. What he did claim was that the *Gospel of Thomas* was not 'gnostic,' or biblical demiurgical. However, his initial impression of the *Gospel of Thomas*, recounted above, demonstrates his interest in finding a Jewish form of Christianity underneath the *Gospel of Thomas*. He proposed that there was a 'Jewish-Christian' source underneath much of the *Thomas* tradition. What Quispel gestures towards here, A. DeConick completes in her study *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*,²³⁹ which will be discussed below.

It is important that one is clear about what Quispel means by 'Judaic Christianity':

by Judaic Christians I mean the descendants of the faction of the "Hebrews" in the congregation of Jerusalem, who had monopolised this church after the "Hellenists" had been obliged to leave. Later on they were variously called Ebionites, Nazoreans, and Elkesaites. They all accepted Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish people; they all remained more or less faithful to the Law of Moses.²⁴⁰

Quispel argues that the *Gospel of Thomas* also evinces an interest in proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and in preserving observance of the Law of Moses. He further proposes that the *Gospel of Thomas* is connected to a 'missionary' task that he understands as uniquely Jewish-Christian. Quispel explains the praxis behind this 'mission' as follows: "The officer of the

²³⁸ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 176.

²³⁹ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and its Growth*. Library of New Testament Studies (New York: T&T Clark, 2006). See also the companion commentary volume, *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation: With a Commentary and New English Translation of the Complete Gospel* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007).

²⁴⁰ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 196.

Jewish-Christian congregation does not possess anything, nor is he allowed to work. That was the commandment of Jesus to his missionaries [cf. *Luke* 10:4-7]... The missionaries should live from the missionfield, not from the home base nor from their private property or their work.”²⁴¹ Quispel, one would assume, appeals to one of the few sayings in *Thomas* that refers to any sort of ‘missionary task,’ that is *Thomas* 14.2.²⁴² There, Jesus says: “Whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.” Quispel, like S. Patterson after him,²⁴³ amplifies this saying considerably in his reconstruction of the community responsible for the *Thomas* tradition.²⁴⁴ Quispel declares that this life on the “missionfield” was uniquely Jewish-Christian. He explains this distinction by proposing that it was the Jewish-Christian commitment to not work for money that made Paul an outsider. Quispel argues that:

Paul never understood this. He knew that the Lord ordered, commanded, that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living by the Gospel. But he boasts repeatedly of not having to avail himself of such a right: he worked for a living. Was it right? Or was it a duty, obedience to a commandment of Jesus? The officers of the Jewish-Christian Church, the itinerant missionaries (apostles or angels) and ecstasies (prophets) went from group to group without possessing anything, trusting that pious people would give them their due.

²⁴¹ Quispel, G., “The Gospel of Thomas Revisited,” 197.

²⁴² See chapter four of this dissertation.

²⁴³ See Patterson, S.J., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, (Polebridge Press, Sonoma, 1993), especially part two. See also: Patterson, S.J., *The Gospel of Thomas within the development of early Christianity*, Claremont Graduate School, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1989; Patterson, S.J., “The Gospel of Thomas and the Historical Jesus: Retrospectus and Prospectus,” in: D. Lull, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature: seminar papers*, 1990, 614-636. See also the discussion of Patterson’s important work in chapter four of this dissertation.

²⁴⁴ The same as has been done with *Thomas* 42. Jesus said: “Be passers-by.” See S. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, chapter six, “Be Passers By.” S. Patterson interprets this passage, along with *Thomas* 14, as an invitation to itinerancy.

Quispel proposes that the earliest Jesus followers were akin to the later Jewish-Christians associated with the Pseudo-Clementine literature. Moreover, he centers this Jewish-Christian tradition around the figure of James, the brother of Jesus, the Bishop of Jerusalem.

In addition to Quispel's proposed Judaic Christian source, he also introduced two others: an Encratite source and a Hermetic Anthology. According to Quispel, many of the treatises in the Nag Hammadi collection were not gnostic, but encratic (i.e. ascetic). In this encratic literature he includes the *Sentences of Sextus* and the *Book of Thomas*, for example. Much of Quispel's argument for an Encratite source behind parts of *Thomas* depends on the Syrian *Odes of Solomon*. This text, which is Semitic according to Quispel,²⁴⁵ is not considered by him to be Jewish-Christian. He bases this on the work of W.C. van Unnik, who argued that "the stocktheme of these hymns was not Jewish, but Platonic, namely the 'apthonia tou theou.'"²⁴⁶ Quispel declares: "Therefore, they are not Judaic Christian, but representative of that Hellenic Christianity prevalent in Edessa towards the end of the second century, very much like Tatian and the Acts of Thomas."²⁴⁷

Though Quispel sees a number of parallels with what he considered was a 'Hellenistic' text, he returns to the Judaic Christian territory, writing: "One sometimes hesitates to say whether the Odes refer to the Gospel of Thomas or to the Judaic Christian Gospel that served as a source of Thomas."²⁴⁸ His case for this is exhibited in the following parallel:

²⁴⁵ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 213

²⁴⁶ Cited in Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 213. The 'Semitic' themes of the text, however, far outweigh any 'Platonic' ones. Indeed, I have yet to find one such theme that is undisputedly 'Platonic.' Cf. Emerton, J.A., "Some Problems of Text and Language in the Odes of Solomon," *JTS*, NS 18 (1967), 372-406; Montgomery, J.A., "The Recently Discovered Odes of Solomon," *The Biblical World*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1910), 93-100; Vööbus, A., *Asceticism*, 62-63.

²⁴⁷ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 213.

²⁴⁸ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 214.

Ps.-Clement <i>Homilies</i> 8.10	<i>Odes of Solomon</i> 19.20	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i> 62
Keep my secret, ye who are kept by it.	Keep the mysteries for me and the sons of my house.	I tell My mysteries to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries.

Quispel further connects the Jerusalem community with the encratic ideal in Asia Minor:

In Apocalypse 14,4 we are told that the 144,000 were not defiled with women for they are virgins. For the author the ideal church of Jerusalem consists exclusively of people that are not married anymore, because sexual intercourse is held to be a defilement. The church is virtually encratite because, for the author of the Apocalypse, the church of Jerusalem is the only church -- the rest are subsidiary.²⁴⁹

Quispel uses these parallels to propose that "There can be no doubt that the Gospel of Thomas continues this Encratite tradition attested to in Asia Minor in the first half of the second century."²⁵⁰

The final source that Quispel identifies is a 'Hermetic source.'²⁵¹ He postulates that the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* used a gnomic collection of Hermetic wisdom comprised of a series of aphorisms and maxims when he compiled the *Gospel of Thomas*. In Quispel's estimation, the manifestation of an interest in 'self-knowledge' and 'knowledge of the All' implies that *Thomas* used a specifically Hermetic gnomic source.

Beyond the three proposed literary sources for the *Gospel of Thomas*, Quispel offers these remarks on the compiler (or as he terms, 'the author') of the *Gospel of Thomas*:

The author of the Gospel of Thomas lived in Edessa in Mesopotamia. He was an Encratite, rejecting marriage, wine and meat, and therefore taught that only

²⁴⁹ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 216.

²⁵⁰ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 216

²⁵¹ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 217.

bachelors could go to heaven. His religious ideal was typically Syrian, the *ihīdaja* or *monachos*, i.e. the androgynous man or woman.²⁵²

This outline, accordingly, closely parallels the Syrian characteristics outlined at the end of chapter one. In summary we can outline Quispel's stratification proposal as follows:

- 1) A Jewish-Christian source related to or part of the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*.
- 2) An encratic source related to the *Odes of Solomon*.
- 3) A Hermetic source related to particular gnostic source of Hermetic wisdom.
- 4) A Syrian encratic author from second century Edessa that edited the above sources and incorporated them into what has become known as the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Quispel's work, perhaps more than any other scholar, has made the case that the *Gospel of Thomas* deserves a place within the reconstruction of Christian beginnings. Though this pioneering work should be appreciated for its elevation of *Thomas* into the scholarly debate, it should also be recognized that there are a number of issues to be raised about its stratification and contextual proposal for the *Gospel of Thomas*. What follows here is a careful critique of Quispel's stratification work. I allocate much space for this critique because Quispel's work has been so influential in Syriac Christian studies.²⁵³

One of the major issues facing Quispel's work is his adherence to what I consider a false dichotomy: 'Hebrew vs. Hellenistic.' These categories are anachronistic. Consider, for example, the Sadducees: they certainly thought of themselves as inheritors of *the* Hebrew tradition, but some of their opponents considered them co-conspirators with the Romans.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 192.

²⁵³ Virtually every Syriac scholar has attributed a Syrian and Jewish-Christian tenor to the *Gospel of Thomas* based primarily on G. Quispel's work.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Saldarini, A.J.J., and VanderKam, J.C., *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Eerdmans, 2001), 77-143.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul certainly continued to view himself as a Jew -- and the historian should not veto this ancient conviction. The spectrum between conservative Jew and Hellenistic Jew was relative; thus it should not be used as a criterion of religious purity in the historical realm.

Quispel, in regard to his proposed 'Jewish Christian' source for *Thomas*, offers a series of "Judaic Christian elements in the Gospel of Thomas" which I will review point by point. He argues that "these specific features, combined with the numerous doublets in the writing [i.e. those sayings that are repeated more than once]... show convincingly that one of the sources of the Gospel of Thomas was definitively Judaic Christian."²⁵⁵ I will outline each of these points, because they are so important to Quispel's argument, and offer a brief remark on each:

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
Log. 2: Let him who seeks etc.: an amplification of a Saying the Gospel of the Hebrews.	This is a common 'relitival opening' applied to many sayings in the ancient world (cf. Crossan, <i>In Fragments</i>). The <i>Gospel of the Hebrews</i> has no exclusive claim on this literary structure. This is a common chreia elaborative exercise applied in the ancient world. (Cf. Theon of Alexandria's <i>progymnasmata</i>).
Log. 6: Do not do what you hate: Hebrew form of the Golden Rule, also attested by Hillel and Tobit.	Aramaic/Hebrew does not equate Jewish-Christian, nor does it imply it. One can speak in Aramaisms without being concerned for Jewish identity markers.

²⁵⁵ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 202.

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
Log. 12: Primacy of James the righteous: in the Gospel of the Hebrews Jesus appears first to James after his resurrection.	This responds to a question in the Gospel of Thomas -- and all of its questions are misguided. Jesus reports what <i>happened</i> not what <i>should</i> happen. Moreover, Thomas, the real hero of the Gospel, is the one given 'special instruction' in the saying that follows in <i>Thomas</i> 13.
Log. 16: I have come to throw divisions upon the earth: parallel in the Pseudo-Clementines (<i>Rec.</i> 2,26,6; 2,28,2; 6,4,6).	The Pseudo-Clementine tradition is much later than the Thomas tradition, so this tradition's appearance in the <i>Clementia</i> is not indicative of anything beyond a literary parallel. It does not suggest 'Jewish-Christianity,' or a source uniquely attached to such sentiments.
Log. 23: One out of thousand... and two out of ten thousand: semitism, cf. Deut. 32,30.	This saying shows up in a variety of disparate sources: Irenaeus, <i>Adv. Haer.</i> , 1.24.6; Epiphanius, <i>Pan.</i> 24.5.4; <i>Pistis Sophia</i> 3.134. Does this suggest that they too are dependent on Judaic/Deuteronomic tradition? Or, rather, perhaps it is a common phrase in the ancient world which has been incorporated by a vast array of disparate traditions.
Log 27: "To keep the Sabbath" is Jewish-Christian.	Given the Thomasine proclivity to 'spiritualize' or 'relativize' Jewish identity markers and practices, there is a good chance that <i>Thomas</i> 27 is <i>changing</i> the meaning of the 'Sabbath' rather than keeping a distinctively Rabbinic or Jewish-Christian notion of the Sabbath. Given the interest in recovering the Genesis 1 condition of 'rest' on the seventh day, I follow S. Davies in considering this saying as a recommendation to live on the seventh day with God, and rest. (Cf. Davies, S., <i>The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained</i> . Woodstock, VT: 2009, 38).

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
<p>Log. 31: A city on the top of a high mountain cannot fall: Jerusalem cannot fall for ever according to Ps. 46,6; 48,9; 77,69.</p>	<p>Jerusalem is not mentioned, so it should not be assumed. This mountain could be a number of other 'high places.' If <i>Thomas</i> made use of the Psalms in other places, then Quispel's parallels would be more persuasive. It is also possible that this saying referred to the building and fortification of Sepphoris near Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. Moreover, because <i>Thomas</i> relativizes many of the Jewish identity markers (see below), it may seem odd that <i>Thomas</i> maintains such a conviction regarding the place of Jerusalem. Moreover, this city referred to in <i>Thomas</i> 31 may be negative example (see the Appendix for another possibility).</p>
<p>Log. 39: Pharisees and Scribes received the keys of knowledge: exclusive parallels in the Pseudo-Clementines (<i>Hom.</i> 3,18,3; <i>Rec.</i> 1,54,7).</p>	<p>They don't receive them, but <i>take</i> them. In this case, as in <i>Q</i>, the Pharisees and Scribes are lampooned, not praised as true inheritors of Jewish tradition. <i>Thomas</i> encourages readers to subvert their authority by being "as innocent as doves and as cunning as snakes."</p>
<p>Log. 44: Blasphemy against God, as in Ps.-Clem. <i>Hom</i> 3,6,1-3.</p>	<p>If this is evidence for a Jewish-Christian source, then all of the Synopitcs (including Luke) should be associated with the 'Judaic Christianity' of James in Jerusalem. Yes this tradition is 'Judaic' but it does not mean that every tradition that shares it shares the convictions of the later Pseudo-Clementine tradition.</p>
<p>Log. 62: "My mysteries for me and for the sons of my house", as in the Clementines (<i>Hom.</i> 19,20,1-2).</p>	<p>This is also in Mark 4:11; but the <i>Gospel of Mark</i> is not to be connected with the Pseudo-Clementine tradition and the Jamesian group in Jerusalem.</p>

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
<p>Log. 64: "Go out to the <i>streets</i>" (not "roads" as in our edition): invitations remain within the city, only Israelites called; cf. Tertullian, <i>adv. Marc.</i> IV,31. Luke adds the calling of the Gentiles. Tradesmen and merchants not in the seats at the dinner of God: Ebionite animus against business.</p>	<p>In Quispel's points above, he often refers to material which is shared in the Synoptic Gospel tradition to a specifically Jewish-Christian context. Yet here G. Quispel suggests that <i>Luke</i> is <i>not</i> Jewish-Christian. Why then is <i>Luke</i> permitted to have Jewish-Christian tradition without being Jewish-Christian, while <i>Thomas</i> is not? Moreover, this parallel is quite remote. It is difficult to follow G. Quispel in assuming that parallels imply shared source, especially when the other source is in the second century.</p>
<p>Log. 65: "He was the heir to the vineyard": the Messiah of Israel.</p>	<p>This is the Marcan reading of the parable, but not the Thomasine. In the <i>Gospel of Thomas</i> the parable of the tenants is not framed by an allegorical interpretation. To assume such an interpretive matrix oversteps the evidence. J.S. Kloppenborg reaches a similar conclusion in his monumental work on this parable, <i>Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, & Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine</i> (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).</p>
<p>Log. 68: The place where they will not be persecuted is Pella.</p>	<p>Pella is not mentioned. There is no reason to <i>read in</i> the Jamesian community here.</p>
<p>Log. 69: They will fill their belly with what they desire: concrete eschatology of Judaic Christianity. The expression is Hebraic; cf. Ps. 17.14: whose belly thou fillest; Luke 15,16: he would fain have <i>filled his belly</i> with the husks that the swine did eat.</p>	<p>Again, G. Quispel appeals to Luke for Judaic traditions, while also maintaining that Luke is not Jewish-Christian. This is inconsistent. This parallel in no way demands a Jewish-Christianity akin to the Jamesian community.</p>

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
<p>Log. 71: The house that will not be built again is the temple. Cf. Gospel of the Ebionites fr. 6: (Jesus said): "I came to do away with sacrifices, and if you cease not from sacrificing, the wrath of God will not cease from you" (the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. is predicted).</p>	<p>The parallel between <i>Thomas</i> 71 and the Ebionite fragment is remote at best. Again, because Quispel <i>assumes</i> that <i>Thomas</i> has a Jewish-Christian source he is able to <i>assume</i> that 'house' here means the Jerusalem Temple. However, there is no mention of sacrifice, nor of Jerusalem, nor of its destruction. <i>Thomas</i> may be doing something different here, and we should remain open to such novelty. Why can't a house just be a house? <i>Thomas</i> is consistently contextualized by other traditions but never permitted to articulate its own context.</p>
<p>Log. 72: "I am not a divider (= schismatic)". Nazoreans and Minim were damned as heretic in the "18 prayers" of orthodoxy.</p>	<p>There is no need to assume that being a 'divider' implies being a 'schismatic.' Why not use the context in the logion itself?</p> <p>72. A man said to Jesus: "Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me." He said to him: "Oh sir, who has made me a divider?" He turned to his disciples and said: "I am not a divider am I?"</p> <p>The issue at hand is the division of possessions within a family inheritance dispute. Quispel has introduced a foreign element in his effort to find a Jewish-Christian source.</p>

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
<p>Log. 84: "When you see your images": according to Jews and Jewish-Christians the Guardian Angel is the image, "iqonin", of man: Acts 12,15.</p>	<p>This connection that Quispel makes is puzzling. The 'image of God' has many more parallels than this -- if this even is a parallel. As discussed in chapter one, the heavenly double plays prominently in Syria and need not be directly associated with a Jamesian Jewish-Christian community. Moreover, Quispel has once again ignored the context of the logion as a whole, which concerns the creation of humanity as the image of God, not as some sort of angel. I quote this passage from <i>Acts</i> 12:15 just to show how much of a stretch the connection is:</p> <p>"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."</p> <p>This has nothing to do with <i>Thomas</i> 84.</p>

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
<p>Log. 88: "The angels and the prophets will come": missionaries and prophets were bearers of office in the Jewish-Christian church (Apoc. 18,20; Luke 11,49). Jesus sends "angels" (i.e. messengers) (Luke 9,52). The prophet Haggai was an "angel" of the Lord to the people (Haggai 1,13s).</p>	<p>These parallels are remote at best. One need not assume that <i>Thomas</i> 88 participates in an itinerant stage within the Jesus Movement. Rather, the saying has closer parallels with <i>Thomas</i> 21.3-4. Compare the two:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thomas</i> 21.3-4</p> <p>When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!' (But) they will strip naked in front of them in order to abandon it, so that the field is returned to them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thomas</i> 88</p> <p>Jesus said: "The messengers and the prophets will come to you. They will give you what is yours and you will give them what you have." You will say to yourselves: 'When will they come and take what is theirs?'</p> <p>I think that <i>Thomas</i> 21.3-4 better serves as an interpretive parallel for <i>Thomas</i> 88. Rather than the very distant parallels that Quispel appeals to.</p>
<p>Log. 90: "Easy is my yoke and my lordship is gentle": same variation of 'ol (yoke) and maruta (lordship) in the Targum of Isaiah (14,25; 47,6).</p>	<p>Though this is a parallel, it does not demand that we assume a Jewish-Christian derivation. Parallels in Jewish Scripture need not force us to see Jamesian Christianity. I see this, rather, as an elaboration on the sapiential tradition preserved in Ben Sirach 51:26-27: "Put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls receive instruction; it is to be found close by. See with your own eyes that I have labored but little and found myself much serenity."</p>

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
Log. 93: Pearls to the swines parallel in the Pseudo-Clementines (<i>Rec.</i> 2,3,5; 3,1,5).	This does not imply that <i>Thomas</i> used a Jewish-Christian source related to the Pseudo-Clementines. 'Pearls to swine' could be used by any Christian immersed in Jewish culture. But this need not mean that the author behind this hypothesized source was concerned with Jewish religious observances.
Log. 95: "Give": also in the Pseudo-Clementines (<i>Rec.</i> 2,3,4; 3,1,5).	Parallels do not equate dependence. This 'parallel' suggests nothing.
Log. 99: Parallel with fragment of the Gospel of the Ebionites. "My brethren and my mother": precedence of oldest son over mother when father dies.	This parallel is a stretch. According to Quispel's reasoning, because a later Ebionite tradition parallels this structure, he sees a shared matrix of hermeneutical concern. This is <i>Jewish custom</i> , not a custom exclusive Jamesian Jewish-Christian tradition. Because Quispel assumes that James represents the 'earliest' form of Christianity, he assumes that is should be the referential horizon for the <i>Gospel of Thomas</i> .
Log. 104: "Comes out of the bridal chamber:" cf. Hieronymus, in <i>Mattheum</i> 1,9: "Quamdiu sponsum in thalamo ... Quum autem propter peccata a nobis recesserit" (PL 26, 59A). The Jewish-Christian fasted and prayed in the night of Passah.	There is no mention of praying and fasting for the night of Passah. Why Quispel assumes this as the context is puzzling. Jesus, in <i>Thomas</i> 104, parodies this practice in a witticism, he does not embrace it: They said to Jesus: "Come, today let us pray and fast." Jesus said: "What sin have I committed, or where have I been defeated?"

G. Quispel on the Judaic Source for the Gospel of Thomas	A brief response
Log. 107: "Which was the largest": cf. Ezekial 34,16.	This quote, which also occurs in <i>Thomas</i> 8, is not the sole possession of Jewish tradition. Rather, 'the largest' serves to depict seekers looking after the gaudy large things, while missing the more important 'small things.' In the fisherman parable, the fisherman throws all of the little fish back and holds on to the largest fish. In the parable of the shepherd, the shepherd stupidly leaves the other ninety-nine sheep for the largest, because 'he loved that one more than all the others.' This parallel in Ezekial 35,16 is not nearly enough to make the case for a Jewish-Christian source concerned with the praxis of the Jamesian group in Jerusalem.
Log. 109: Treasure hidden in his field: exact parallel in Midrash on Song of Songs 4,13 (116a): "R. Simeon b. Yohai taught: 'He is like a man who inherited a piece of ground used as a dunghill. Being an indolent man, he went and sold it for a trifling sum. The purchaser began working and digging it up, and he found a treasure there, out of which he built himself a fine palace.'"	A common image or metaphor does not demand a Jewish-Christian source. J.D. Crossan's study of this parable definitively demonstrates this. Cf. Crossan, J.D., <i>Finding in the First Act: Trove Follies and Jesus' Treasure Parable</i> (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).
Log. 113: "Kingdom spread upon the earth": cf. Testament of Levi 18,5: "The knowledge of the Lord shall be poured forth upon the earth as the waters of the seas."	This parallel is accidental and rather remote. Again, it does not indicate a Jewish-Christian source that derived from the Jamesian group in Jerusalem.

If each of these points by Quispel, in most instances, does not hold individually, why would they stand collectively? The problem is that there really is not one definitive case made above that could not also have a number of other interpretations or possible sources. These Judaic elements cited above are proved to be very 'thin' when carefully analyzed. The overall assumption that Quispel has applied in his points above is circular, and it operates as follows:

Because earliest Christianity was like the Jamesian (Jerusalem) community, one should be able to find evidence of such in most of the early Christian texts; and because there are 'Semitic-like' components in the *Gospel of Thomas* they *must* be related to the Jamesian community because the Jamesian community was the earliest form of Christianity.

Quispel also uses *Thomas* 89 as evidence of a Judaic Christian source,²⁵⁶ which reads as follows: "Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not understand that the one who created the inside is also the one that created the outside?" While I certainly agree that this witty responsive chreia²⁵⁷ derives from a Jewish milieu, I do not think it can be read as proof of a 'Judaic Christian source' underneath much of the *Gospel of Thomas*. By 'Judaic Christian' Quispel means those who were inheritors of the Hebrew tradition in Jerusalem who "remained more or less faithful to the Law of Moses."²⁵⁸ And by faithful, Quispel means adherence to the basic Jewish identity markers and customs including circumcision, Sabbath observance, dietary restrictions, and (presumably) ritual purity, as in the case of the cup above. However, there is a very important point missed here: Jesus (in *Thomas* 89) is relativizing this tradition, not confirming it. I agree that Pseudo-Macarius and Tatian's *Diatessaron* have preserved this Thomasine tradition of using the verb 'wash' rather than 'to purify,' but this is hardly cause to assume a Judaic Christian source underneath parts of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Quispel is too committed, in my opinion, to stylistic literary components as 'clear' evidence of polarity between Hellenistic and Jewish. Quispel, for example, declares that Luke's addition of the phrase "you fools!" to the cup tradition is a clear indication of Stoic

²⁵⁶ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 206-207.

²⁵⁷ See the Appendix for my discussion on the chreia elaborative schemes operating in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

²⁵⁸ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 196.

diatribe style.²⁵⁹ However, this is far from certain -- the Stoics had no exclusive claim to this literary structure. And it must be remembered: the author of the *Gospel of Luke* was *Jewish*. We simply cannot, from our modern vantage point, determine who was *really* Jewish. This anachronism has clouded Quispel's source theory significantly. Additionally, Quispel assumes, I think incorrectly, that Aramaic implies earlier and that Greek implies later and less Jewish.

Quispel's case for his proposed Judaic Christian source, on close inspection, rests on some rather unsubstantiated assumptions. Take the example of the cup-washing saying above. Quispel finds it very significant that "Thomas, the author of the source of the Clementines and Macarius"²⁶⁰ share the specific phrasing of 'washing' rather than 'purifying.' This is how Quispel makes part of his argument for a Judaic Christian source:

Now it would seem that, if Thomas at about 140 A.D. hypothetically could be using a collection of Sayings as his source and even could be, in a way, the forerunner of the Greek Q, it is almost impossible to suppose that Macarius still was familiar with it. He knew the Gospel of Thomas but there he did not find the original reading "full of filth." He knew the Diatessaron but he did not find it there either. Would it not be more probable that he took it from the Gospel of the Nazoreans, which was in use in Beroea (Aleppo) about 400, when Jerome visited the Jewish-Christians there?²⁶¹

Though this argument initially appears persuasive, once it is analyzed piece by piece, it is readily apparent, I think, that its assumptions require far more proof. Let me list the assumptions below, with a brief remark on each:

²⁵⁹ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 207.

²⁶⁰ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 207.

²⁶¹ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 207.

- (1) That *Thomas* derived from about 140 C.E. -- this is a debated point.²⁶² I, for instance, put the complete *Gospel of Thomas* somewhere in the early second century, closer to 100 C.E. along with S. Patterson and H. Koester.²⁶³
- (2) That *Thomas* was using a preexisting Judaic Christian source -- this assumption is problematic, because this premise is being used to find itself as the conclusion, namely that *Thomas* used a Jewish-Christian source associated with the Jamesian community. This makes the argument circular.
- (3) That this proposed source was "a forerunner of the Greek Q" -- this assumes incorrectly that Aramaic always means earlier than Greek.²⁶⁴
- (4) That Pseudo-Macarius *knew* the *Gospel of Thomas* -- I would suggest, rather, that Macarius knew Thomasine traditions, but not necessarily *the Gospel of Thomas*. The Macarius parallels with the *Thomas* tradition, though impressive, are not attested enough to warrant dependence.²⁶⁵
- (5) That the *Gospel of Thomas* did not include the 'original' reading: "full of filth" -- this presumes that "full of filth" is the 'original' reading, which cannot be demonstrated definitively.

²⁶² Cf. Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, SCM Press, (London: Trinity Press, Philadelphia, 1990; Koester, H., "Gnomai Diaphoroi: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 58, 1965, 279-318; Baarda, T., Thomas and Tatian, in: T. Baarda, ed., *Early transmission of words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the text of the New Testament* (VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 1983), 37-49.

²⁶³ Cf. Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 129; Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 113. See Grenfell and Hun, ΛΟΓΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ, 6.

²⁶⁴ See J.S. Kloppenborg's engagement with this question in his book, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*. The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 51-63.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Baker, A., "Pseudo-Macarius and the Gospel of Thomas," *Vigiliae Christianae* 18, (1964), 215-225; Quispel, G., The Syrian Thomas and the Syrian Macarius, *Vigiliae Christianae* 18, (1964), 226-235.

- (6) Because *Thomas* and the *Diatessaron* did not have Quispel's 'original' reading, "full of filth," they must be later than a preexisting source that had the assumed 'original' reading -- this again assumes that we have access to the 'original' reading, which we do not.
- (7) Conclusion: "Would it not be more probable that he took it from the Gospel of the Nazoreans, which was in use in Beroea (Aleppo) about 400, when Jerome visited the Jewish-Christians there?" – No, this would not be more probable. Quispel expects us to follow that the *much later* tradition in Beroea, as recorded in Jerome, is somehow responsible for Pseudo-Macarius' quotation. And that because Macarius' tradition retains the 'original version' while also being aware of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Diatesseron*, Quispel concludes that it is easiest to assume that this *much later* tradition was *the Judaic Christian source* behind part of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Quispel drives the above argument further writing that "If this Gospel of the Nazoreans was known to the author of the *Liber Graduum* [i.e. *Book of Steps*], would it not be plausible that Macarius who lived in the same age, in the same region and the same milieu used this same source?"²⁶⁶ He continues his argument writing: "But then we must suppose that it [the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*] was already in existence about 140 A.D., when the Gospel of Thomas was composed."²⁶⁷ The existing fragments of the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Gospel of the Nazoreans* (if it is possible to distinguish between the two), can also be read as revealing a dependence upon the synoptic Gospels.²⁶⁸ Quispel's argument fails if the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*

²⁶⁶ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 207.

²⁶⁷ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 207-208.

²⁶⁸ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 208.

is dependent on the Synoptic Gospels, which I think is the straightforward case. Quispel admittedly laments that

It is unfortunate that our knowledge of the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition is so fragmentary that we cannot affirm with any certainty which fragments belong to which Gospel. Moreover the fragments conventionally attributed to the Gospel of the Nazoreans and the Gospel of the Hebrews can be interpreted both ways, either dependent upon or independent from the canonical Gospels. We cannot determine for sure which elements in the fragments of the Gospel of the Ebionites are derived from our Gospels and which from the Judaic Christian tradition. In these circumstances it would perhaps be wiser to refrain from giving a name to the Gospel which served as a source for "Thomas." It may even have been a collection of Sayings.²⁶⁹

Quispel indicates what may be the rationale behind his stratification theory when he writes:

Now the most important thing of all is that Thomas here transmits an independent tradition. But it is not quite without interest to ascertain whether a Jewish-Christian Gospel contained some independent tradition. Is it not somewhat absurd to suppose that the descendants of the primitive Church of Jerusalem should have had to depend upon Gentile information for their knowledge of Jesus?²⁷⁰

Quispel's artificial polarity between Jewish and Gentile Christianity has led him to fight a battle that need not be fought anymore. It is because Quispel is out to find a Gospel tradition *independent* of what he terms 'Gentile Christianity' that he has searched after and found an independent Jewish-Christian tradition tucked into the *Gospel of Thomas*. However, his ultimate reason for searching for an independent Jewish-Christian source lies in his conviction that "the primitive Church of Jerusalem should [*not*] have had to depend upon Gentile information for their knowledge of Jesus."²⁷¹ While it is right to assume that Christians of Jewish inheritance and extraction did not need Gentiles to learn about Jesus,

²⁶⁹ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 211.

²⁷⁰ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 208.

²⁷¹ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 208.

they also certainly didn't need an Aramaic source to prove their legitimacy. Why could they not have used the Jesus traditions recorded in Greek for their purposes? Why must we have Aramaic sources for Jewish-Christians? According to my reading of the evidence, I would suggest the following: Jesus spoke in Aramaic to primarily Aramaean audiences, but his teachings were *written in Greek, by Jews*. However, this is not to suggest that Jesus' closest disciples did not speak or write in Hebrew. The issue is that we do not have any Aramaic Gospels -- if there ever were any.

Beyond the question of Jewish-Christian source behind the *Gospel of Thomas*, it is important to test Quispel's hypothesis that *Thomas* reflects a particularly Jewish-Christian practice. Quispel suggested that the *Gospel of Thomas* evinced an interest in proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and in preserving observance of the Law of Moses. Two points: first, the term 'Messiah' is not used once in the *Gospel of Thomas* -- moreover, we must know what this proclamation is against (was it Jesus as a sage, as Sophia, or as an angel, or what?); second, beyond the saying about the Sabbath (*Thomas* 27), there is nothing that demonstrates concern for the Mosaic Law (prayer, fasting, and almsgiving is condemned in *Thomas* 14, circumcision is spiritualized in *Thomas* 53, and dietary restrictions are dismissed as irrelevant). The fact that there are more Jewish customs relativized and/or dismissed than embraced in the *Gospel of Thomas* makes the assumption that it incorporates specifically Jewish-Christian theology untenable.

It is also important to assess Quispel's proposal that the earliest Jesus followers were akin to the later Jewish-Christians associated with the Pseudo-Clementine literature. Certainly his earliest followers were Jewish -- there is no doubting this. But, were they Jewish in the manner that the Ebionites and those responsible for the Pseudo-Clementine

literature were? I think this is doubtful²⁷²: both the Ebionites and the Pseudo-Clementia *respond* to preexisting Gospel material associated with the Matthean community. If the current scholarly reconstruction of the Q Gospel²⁷³ is to be granted a degree of trustworthiness then our earlier dependence on the Marcan narrative should be expanded to incorporate the insights provided by Q scholarship. What is important to note is that the history of the earliest Jesus movement(s) is far more complex than many scholars imagine. The Synoptic Gospels are finished *theological* products, but not necessarily accurate *historical* accounts of the earliest Jesus movement(s).²⁷⁴ Though they retain much of the earliest traditions of Jesus they are also actively engaged in the meaning-making and elaborative process. My point being: the Gospels are not the *beginning* of the recordings of Jesus' sayings and activities, but the *culmination* of at least two generations of interpretive elaboration on preexisting Jesus material. This being said, I cannot follow Quispel's assumption that we can read the Pseudo-Clementine literature *back into* the earliest Jesus movement(s): the Pseudo-Clementine literature is too theologically developed to warrant such a move. Moreover, I cannot uncritically follow Quispel's veiled assumption that St. James represents the purest form of

²⁷² Cf. Taylor, J.E., "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1990), 313-334.

²⁷³ Refer to the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at Claremont University's *International Q Project*. See especially the institute's *The Critical Edition of Q: A Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, J.M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann, and J.S. Kloppenborg, eds., in the *Hermeneia* series, (Minneapolis: Fortress, and Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

²⁷⁴ The canonical Gospels are not biographies but proclamations of 'good news' and of Jesus' *meaning*.

the Jesus' movement. If Jesus' sayings about his family are accurate,²⁷⁵ we can be sure that there may have been misunderstandings. The problem at hand is the assumption that there was once such a thing as 'the earliest form of Christianity' from which everything else is judged as a departure from or a corruption. This is nothing but the reading of later arguments of the second century *back into* the past.²⁷⁶ It is better to maintain the following: there has always been variation, experimentation, and diversity in the early Jesus Movements.

In addition to the Jewish-Christian source, Quispel, as mentioned above, introduces two other source proposals: an encratic source and a hermetic source. Part of his argument for the encratic source was the parallel traditions in the *Odes of Solomon* and the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature:

Ps.-Clement <i>Homilies</i> 8.10	<i>Odes of Solomon</i> 19.20	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i> 62
Keep my secret, ye who are kept by it.	Keep the mysteries for me and the sons of my house.	I tell My mysteries to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries.

I cannot help but wonder why each of these traditions might not rely on a tradition associated with the mysteries of the parables in Mark 4:11.²⁷⁷ Whatever the case, the parallel with the Pseudo-Clementines above is not enough to suggest that the *Odes of Solomon* were in any way dependent on the hypothesized Judaic source underneath the *Gospel of Thomas*. Quispel also

²⁷⁵ From the *Thomas* tradition consider these examples:

55.1 Jesus said: "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot be a disciple of mine."

55.2 And whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and carry his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.

99. The disciples said to him: "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."

He said to them: "Those who do the will of my Father, they are my brothers and my mother. They are (truly) the ones who enter the kingdom of my Father."

²⁷⁶ For a description of these second century arguments, see E. Pages, *Beyond Belief*, chapters four and five.

²⁷⁷ "And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables."

proposes that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (as preserved in Patristic quotations) served as a source for some of these encratite traditions.²⁷⁸ This, again, implies that parallels suggest dependence, rather than shared thematic referential matrix. I favor the latter because dependence and independence is very difficult to demonstrate persuasively; for the sake of caution, I assume shared thematic matrix rather than dependence. Quispel, on the other hand, uses the fact that there are doublets (i.e. repeated sayings traditions) in the *Gospel of Thomas* to prove that the traditions shared with the *Gospel of the Egyptians* had been developed into *Thomas*.²⁷⁹ According to Quispel, because it was developed it must have been later. But, what of the other doublets in the *Gospel of Thomas*?²⁸⁰ Are these also developed traditions from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*? I'm sure that Quispel would agree that they are not. So this piece of evidence is not dependable. Additionally, Quispel's proposed trajectory of tradition "starting with the Gospel of the Egyptians and continued by the Odes of Solomon and the Acts of Thomas"²⁸¹ cannot be adopted without much more support. There is little to suggest that the *Odes of Solomon* were in any way dependent on the fragmentary *Gospel of the Egyptians*.²⁸²

Quispel, as mentioned above, argues that the manifestation of an interest in 'self-knowledge' and 'knowledge of the All' implies that *Thomas* used a specifically Hermetic gnostic source. Though the parallels are impressive, they do not suggest literary dependence.

²⁷⁸ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 215.

²⁷⁹ G. Quispel argues that *Thomas* 55 (which was Judaic Christian) was developed by a later encratic author, but there is no reason to suppose that *Thomas* 55 was originally 'Judaic Christian' rather than some other sort. Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 215.

²⁸⁰ According to J.M. Asgeirsson the doublets are as follows: Logia 21b and 10; Logia 22c and 10; Logia 55 and 101; Logia 56 and 80; Logia 87 and 112. From: Asgeirsson, J.M., *Doublets and Strata: Towards a rhetorical approach to the Gospel of Thomas*, (Claremont Graduate University Doctoral Dissertation, 1998).

²⁸¹ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 216.

²⁸² To my mind, I cannot find the parallels that Quispel does between the two texts.

Rather, the Hermetic-like material appears to have been elaborated according to standard Hellenistic chreia elaborative principles.²⁸³ Consider, for example, *Thomas* 2:

2.1 *Let* the one who seeks continue seeking until he finds.

2.2 *And* when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed, and he will rule-as-a-king over (the) All.

The initial aphorism in *Thomas* 2.1 seems to be a *performancial variation*²⁸⁴ on the earlier core tradition in *Thomas* 92.1: “Seek and you will find.” The saying makes use of an *experiential opening* and employs the chreia exercise of *expansion*. The clause in *Thomas* 2.2, in my opinion, does not represent a quote from another ‘source,’ but, rather, an *elaboration* of the aphorism in *Thomas* 2.1 (in the chreia exercises, this was accomplished *in the manner of an explanation*). The problem with Quispel’s proposed Hermetic source is the assumption underneath it: for Quispel, parallels often equate literary dependence. However, this was rarely the case in the ancient world. More often than not, parallels indicated awareness but not literary dependence. This is indicated in the Thomas-Hermetic parallels by the lack of verbatim agreement. What is agreed upon is a general *insight*, but not a *literary* source. ‘Self knowledge’ can hardly be the sole possession of Hermetic philosophy,²⁸⁵ as it is as old as the great Delphic Oracle: ‘Know thyself.’ I propose, rather, that Hermetic philosophy was afloat in the Edessene environs and that the *Gospel of Thomas* integrated Hermetic-like insights. This integration, however, was *elaborative, not dependent on a written source*. Without demonstrative verbatim parallels it is difficult to presume literary dependence.

²⁸³ See the Appendix to this dissertation for a full description of this argument.

²⁸⁴ Each of the italicized words and phrases are taken from J.D. Crossan’s work on the aphoristic tradition of Jesus, *In Fragments*, 37-119.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Ebeling, F., *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*, D. Lorton, trans., (Cornell University Press, 2007), 3-36.

The major problem that Quispel's stratification theory faces is his assumption that *Thomas* was comprised of *literary sources* rather than as later *elaborations* of preexisting material and insertions of variations on oral material. There is little in *Thomas* to suggest that the final compiler had a series of *texts* beside him or her. Moreover, Quispel's tendency to interpret thematic parallels as evidence of *literary dependence* rather than as elaborative 'awareness' forces him to consider (or, at times, assume) *written* sources behind these parallels. An example of such is demonstrated by his suggestion that doublet traditions (such as *Thomas* 55 and 101) must be "based here upon two *written* sources which are not the canonical Gospels."²⁸⁶ J.A. Asgeirsson has since shown that the later (i.e. later in the extant sequence of the *Thomas* tradition) doublet traditions may have been *re-written* and *elaborated* components of *earlier preexisting sayings material*. His revised list of doublets reads as follows:

Logia 21b and 103
Logia 22c and 106
Logia 55 and 101
Logia 56 and 80
Logia 87 and 112²⁸⁷

In regard to Quispel's proposal that doublets *presume* written sources behind them, I think it is much easier to see *elaborations within* rather than *dependence from outside*. Moreover, for Quispel's source theory to be persuasive it will need substantial revision to continue to command attention.

²⁸⁶ Quispel, G., "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," 181.

²⁸⁷ Asgeirsson, J.M., *Doublets and Strata*, 161.

Traditional Models

A. DeConick has recently divided the past stratification theories of the *Gospel of Thomas* into two basic forms.²⁸⁸ The first involved a compiler with preexisting (written) Gospel sources and developed them in a 'gnostic'-like direction.²⁸⁹ The second generally proposed "that the author of the gospel used one or more collections of Jesus' sayings rather than entire gospels as his sources, leaving room for the possibility that oral traditions may have been part of the source pool."²⁹⁰ The first general model suffers from a lack coherence and purpose. If the *Gospel of Thomas* was just a random collection of material from earlier canonical Gospels,

²⁸⁸ DeConick, A.D., "The Original *Gospel of Thomas*," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (May, 2002), 167-199, 168.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Grant, R.M., and Freedman, D.N., *The Secret Sayings of Jesus*, (Garden City/Doubleday Collins, New York/London, 1960); Munck, J., *Bemerkungen zum koptischen Thomasevangelium*, *Studia Theologica* 14, 2, 1960, 130-147; Gärtner, B., *The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas*, (Collins/Harper, London/New York, 1961); McArthur, H.K., "The dependence of the Gospel of Thomas on the Synoptics," *Expository Times* 71, 1960, 286-287; McArthur, H.K., "The Gospel according to Thomas," in: H.K. McArthur, ed., *New Testament Sidelights: Essays in honour of A.C. Purdy*, (Seminary Foundation Press, Hartford, Connecticut, 1960), 43-77; Schoedel, W.R., "The gospel in the new gospels," *Dialog* 6, 1967, 115-122; Schoedel, W.R., "Naassene themes in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas," *Vigiliae Christianae* 14, 1960, 225-234; Schoedel, W.R., "Parables in the Gospel of Thomas: oral tradition or gnostic exegesis?", *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43, 1972, 548-560; Haenchen, E., *Die Botschaft des Thomas-Evangeliums*, (Alfred Töpelmann, Berlin, 1961); Haenchen, E., "Literatur zum Thomasevangelium," *Theologische Rundschau* 27, 2;4, 1961, 147-178; 306-338; Haenchen, E., "Spruch 68 des Thomasevangeliums," *Le Muséon* 75, 1962, 19-29; Schrage, W., "Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur gnostischen Synoptikerdeutung," *Beihfte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche*, (Alfred Töpelmann, Berlin, 1964); Schürmann, H., "Das Thomasevangelium und das lukanische Sondergut," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 7, 1963, 236-260; Ménard, J.E., "La Sagesse et le logion 3 de l'Évangile selon Thomas," in: F. Cross, ed., *Studia patristica*, 1970, 137-140; Ménard, J.E., "L'Évangile selon Thomas et le Nouveau Testament," *Studia Montis regii* 9, 1966, 147-153; Ménard, J.E., "Les problèmes de l'Évangile selon Thomas," in: M. Krause, ed., *Essays on the Nag Hammadi texts*, 1972, 59-73.

²⁹⁰ See the following studies for a similar perspective: "Grobel, K., How gnostic is the Gospel of Thomas?", *New Testament Studies* 8, 1962, 367-373; Strobel, F.A., "Textgeschichtliches zum Thomas-Logion 86," *Vigiliae Christianae* 17, 1963, 211-224; Doresse, J., *The secret books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An introduction to the Gnostic Coptic manuscripts discovered at Chenoboskion*, (Viking/Hollis & Carter, New York/London, 1960); Cullmann, O., and Puech, H.C., "The great discovery of the 'Gospel of Thomas'," *The Sunday Times*, November 15th 1959, 18; Frend, W.H.C., "Gospel of Thomas: Is rehabilitation possible?", *Journal of Theological Studies* 18, 1967, 13-26; Koester, H., "Gnomai diaphoroi: the origin and nature of diversification in the history of early christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 58, 1965, 279-318; Koester, H., "One Jesus and four primitive gospels," *Harvard Theological Review* 61, 1968, 203-247; Koester, H., "Three Thomas parables," in: A. Logan, and A. Wedderburn, eds., *The New Testament and Gnosis*, 1983, 195-203; Koester, H., and Patterson, S.J., "The Gospel of Thomas: Does it contain authentic sayings of Jesus?", *Bible Review* 6, 1990, 28-39; Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, (SCM Press; Trinity Press International, London; Philadelphia, 1990).

why was it put together? The major problem with the first model is that it provides no rationale for the composition of the *Gospel of Thomas*.²⁹¹

H. Schenke

According to the theory proposed by H. Schenke, the compiler of the *Gospel of Thomas* extracted a number of dominical sayings from a work akin to that of Papias' source²⁹² in the second century in order to unshackle them from their interpretive frameworks. By doing such, according to Schenke, the sayings were open to receive entirely new interpretations.²⁹³

Schenke proposes that:

The composition of the [*Gospel of Thomas*] cannot have been done in such a way that a person would have simply written down the oral redaction of a given Christian community here or that an author or a redactor would have revised and rearranged a smaller collections of sayings which already existed in writing to that effect, although exactly this is the way in which scholars, especially of the Koester school, more or less implicitly conceive of it, as it seems on the tacit (unimaginative) premise that there is no other possible way of conception.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ The best representative is certainly C.M. Tuckett's, "Thomas and the Synoptics," *Novum Testamentum* 30, 1988, 132-157.

²⁹² Eusebius of Caesarea describes this as follows:

Papias has left us five volumes entitled *The Sayings of the Lord Explained*. These are mentioned by Irenaeus as the only works from his pen:

"To these things Papias, and who lived at a very early date, bears written testimony in the fourth of his books; he composed five."

That is what Irenaeus says; but Papias himself in the preface to his work makes it clear that he was never a hearer or eyewitness of the holy Apostles, and tells us that he learnt the essentials of the Faith from their former pupils. (*The History of the Church*, 39.1-2).

²⁹³ Schenke, H., "Compositional History," 21-24.

²⁹⁴ Schenke, H., "Compositional History," 3-4.

Here Schenke has assisted the scholarly community in looking beyond the false dichotomy of 'orality' vs. 'textuality.'²⁹⁵ At some point the two forms of remembrance and elaboration must meet *on the page*. According to Schenke we must learn to see 'oral' elaborative moves *within the medium of text*. However, this is not to suggest that the potency of orality is somehow limited by text -- only that it can operate within the medium of text as well.

Though H. Schenke's work accomplishes little more than stating the problem of *Thomas'* composition more precisely, he did further emphasize three main issues. The first, as in Quispel and Asgeirsson above, is the existence of doublets of sayings. The second, the elaborative frames attached to sayings. Some of these frames Schenke considered "meaningless," while others he considered "important."²⁹⁶ The third, the isolation of sayings that are, in canonical literature, clustered with other sayings.²⁹⁷ For Schenke, this suggests that the sayings were *detached*, rather than *originally in isolation*.

²⁹⁵ W. Kelber has offered the scholarly community the most on this front. Cf. W.H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. Rpt. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997). See also: James D. G. Dunn. "Jesus in Oral Memory: The Initial Stages of the Jesus Tradition," in: *SBL Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature), 287-326; E. P. Sanders. *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*. Society for New Testament Studies, 9. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

²⁹⁶ Schenke, H., "Compositional History," 5-20.

²⁹⁷ Such as *Thomas* 21.10 and Mark 4:29.

According to T. Baarda,²⁹⁸ the compiler was primarily interested in gathering a number of sayings from preexisting Jesus traditions and isolating them so as to create new 'gnostic' meanings.²⁹⁹ Baarda further proposes that the compiler collected from both canonical and 'gnostic' written and oral material, but was expressly keen on reorienting the entire tradition toward a 'gnostic' interpretive matrix. Baarda also entertains the possibility that *Thomas* used Tatian's *Diatessaron*, rather than the opposite.³⁰⁰

Because Baarda resists broad conclusions but concentrates on the specifics and individual sayings, it is difficult to assess his overall stratification theory. While Baarda believes it is possible that *Thomas* is independent, he elects to consider the tradition as dependent. His reasons for doing this are not very clear. The proposal that a 'gnostic' editor went through the canonical sayings picking out sayings at random and inserting new 'gnostic' sayings does not appreciate the literary and thematic complexity operating within the *Gospel of*

²⁹⁸ Baarda, T., "Διαφωνία-Συμφωνία: Factors in the Harmonization of the Gospels," in T. Baarda, et. al. eds., *Essays on the Diatessaron*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 11, (Kampen: Pharos, 1994). For his other important Thomas studies, see: Baarda, T., "Chose" or "collected": Concerning an Aramaism in logion 8 of the Gospel of Thomas and the question of independence, *Harvard Theological Review* 84, 1991, 373- 397; Baarda, T., "The gospel text in the Biography of Rabbula," *Vigiliae Christianae* 14, 1960, 102-127; Baarda, T., If you do not sabbatize the Sabbath: the Sabbath as God or world in gnostic understanding (Ev Thom Log 27) , in: R. Broek; T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld, eds., *Knowledge of God*, 1988, 178-201; Baarda, T., Jesus said: Be passers-by: On the meaning and origin of logion 42 of the Gospel of Thomas, in: T. Baarda, ed., *Early transmission of words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the text of the New Testament*, (VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 1983), 179-205; Baarda, T., "Thomas and Tatian," in: T. Baarda, ed., *Early transmission of words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the text of the New Testament*, (VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 1983), 37-49.

²⁹⁹ Baarda, T., "Διαφωνία-Συμφωνία," 148.

³⁰⁰ Baarda, T., "Διαφωνία-Συμφωνία," 36. For a similar argument see: Baarda, T., "Thomas and Tatian" in: T. Baarda, ed., *Early transmission of words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the text of the New Testament*, (VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 1983), 37-49; Schippers, R., "Het Evangelie van Thomas een onafhankelijke traditie? Antwoord aan professor Quispel," *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 61, 1961, 46-54; Perrin, N., *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (SBLAB 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); Baker, A., Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron, *Journal of Theological Studies* 16, 1965, 449-454.

Thomas. Furthermore, if Baarda's theory were to prove persuasive, it would need to be supplied with a rationale behind the selection of sayings and would have to make sense of the variations from the canonical material. Baarda's work, however, has succeeded in offering a needed caution for *Thomas* scholarship in regard to the search for an Aramaic substratum. He concludes his article, "'The Cornerstone' An Aramaism in the Diatessaron and the Gospel of Thomas?," as follows:

The search for Aramaisms in the 'Gospel of Thomas' is one of the legitimate approaches to detect archaic material in this remarkable Gospel. It is one of the merits of my Utrecht colleague Quispel that he has made several attempts at uncovering the Semitic strata of the tradition behind the Greek and Coptic texts of this Gospel. The search for Aramaisms is, however, not always an easy one. The present contribution shows that one has to be very careful in assessing the Aramaic colouring of a tradition.³⁰¹

S. Davies

S. Davies in his book, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, theorized four main 'sections' of the Gospel, each with a concern for "seeking and finding."³⁰² Davies identifies these four sections as follows: the first, logia 2-37; the second, logia 38-58; the third, logia 59-91; and fourth, 92-113. These framing thematic logia, in Davies' estimation, represent the

³⁰¹ Baarda, T., "'The Cornerstone' An Aramaism in the Diatessaron and the Gospel of Thomas?," 300.

³⁰² See these important works by S. Davies on *Thomas* related material: Davies, S.L., *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, (Seabury/Harper & Row, New York, 1983); Davies, S.L., "The Christology and Protology of the Gospel of Thomas," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, 1992, 663- 682; Davies, S.L., "A Cycle of Jesus's Parables," *Biblical Archaeologist* 46, 1983, 15-17; Davies, S.L., "Thomas: the Fourth Synoptic Gospel," *Biblical Archaeologist* 46, 1983, 6-9, 12-14.

earliest stratum of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Davies maintains that “whoever put the document together must surely have done it in what he or she thought a proper and rational order.”³⁰³

According to Davies’ thesis, the *Gospel of Thomas* is dependent on the Jewish wisdom tradition and was independent of the canonical Gospels. Davies further asserts that “Thomas is a collection of metaphors for a single underlying set of ideas”³⁰⁴ which are “unitive, urging the finding of ‘light’ or ‘Kingdom’ or ‘image’ in both the world and the individual.”³⁰⁵ This searching and finding motif was, according to Davies, performed within the “rite of baptism.”³⁰⁶ Finally, Davies proposed that the *Gospel of Thomas* is interested in reinterpreting the Genesis 1-3 narrative, which I will explore in detail in chapter three.³⁰⁷

Davies succeeds in making the case for a non-‘gnostic’ categorical approach to the *Gospel of Thomas* but has yet to detail by what mechanism these different themes entered the tradition. Davies treats the *Gospel of Thomas* as a unitary document without stratification, which makes the uneasy juxtaposition of very different themes difficult to rationalize.

³⁰³ Davies, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 155. S. Davies himself states that he looks “forward to the time when someone unambiguously uncovers the secret to *Thomas*’ order, or, indeed, to the time when we can conclude that the sayings are essentially random, for that seemingly discouraging result would in fact be a negative conclusion of considerable interest and significance.” (*The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 155. I think the most interesting attempt at this was offered by A. Callahan, “‘No Rhyme or Reason’: The Hidden Logia of the ‘Gospel of Thomas,’” *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4, Jesus’ Sayings in the Life of the Early Church: Papers Presented in Honor of Helmut Koester’s Seventieth Birthday (Oct., 1997), 411-426. According to A. Callahan: “In *Thomas*, the medley of forms surpasses genre. The organizing principle of the sapiential sayings collection ostensibly has little rhyme or reason; but on closer inspection, it proves to have, if not rhyme, at least alliteration and assonance. Its reason, the *logos*, of these *logoi sophon*, as James Robinson has taught us to call them, is the metalogical mesh of lexical links and matching motifs of this ‘old sequence’ that constitutes the sayings of the *Gospel of Thomas*.” (*Ibid.*, 426.)

³⁰⁴ Davies, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 68.

³⁰⁵ Davies, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 68.

³⁰⁶ Davies, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 136.

³⁰⁷ Davies, S., “The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (1992), 663-682; 664. See also: Pagels, E., “Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 118, No. 3 (1999), 477-496.

Moreover, his four main sections, which he defines by the theme of ‘seeking and finding,’ include a lot of material that does not reflect the framing theme. For example, what does *Thomas* 105 -- “Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!” -- have to do with ‘seeking and finding wisdom’? While this framing theme does permeate much of the *Thomas* tradition, it is important to make sense of the intervening material that makes little sense within this interpretive framework.

H. Koester

It was H. Koester who reacted most sternly against the charge of ‘gnosticism’ and dependency in *Thomas* while advocating for both the independence of the tradition and its primitive (i.e. early) character.⁵⁰⁸ Where previous scholars saw ‘gnostic’ reinterpretation of Jesus’ sayings, Koester saw elaborations of Jesus’ “original proclamation,”⁵⁰⁹ which was decisively anti-apocalyptic⁵¹⁰ and sapiential in posture. For Koester, the *Gospel of Thomas* was

⁵⁰⁸ See these works: Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, (SCM Press; Trinity Press International, London; Philadelphia, 1990); Koester, H., “Gnomai diaphoroi: the origin and nature of diversification in the history of early christianity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 58, 1965, 279-318; Koester, H., “Gnostic writings as witnesses for the development of the sayings tradition,” in: B. Layton, ed., *Rediscovery of gnosticism*, 1980, 238-256; Koester, H., “Gnostic sayings and controversy traditions in John 8:12-59,” in: C. Hedrick, and R. Hodgson, eds., *Nag Hammadi, gnosticism*, 1986, 97-110; Koester, H., “La tradition apostolique et les origines du gnosticisme,” *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 1, 1987, 1-16; Koester, H., “One Jesus and four primitive gospels,” *Harvard Theological Review* 61, 1968, 203-247; Koester, H., “Q and its relatives,” in: J. Goehring, ed., *Gospel origins and Christian beginnings*, 1990, 49-63; Koester, H., “Three Thomas parables,” in: A. Logan, and A. Wedderburn, eds., *The New Testament and Gnosis*, 1983, 195- 203; Koester, H., and Lambdin, T.O., “Gospel of Thomas (II, 2),” in: J. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 1977, 117-130; Koester, H., and Patterson, S.J., “The Gospel of Thomas: Does it contain authentic sayings of Jesus?,” *Bible Review* 6, 1990, 28-39.

⁵⁰⁹ Koester, H., “One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels,” 172.

⁵¹⁰ Koester, H., “One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels,” 171.

initially a collection of very early (perhaps the earliest) Jesus material (stratum one) and later reinterpretation of this material with the insertion of newer material (redaction stratum).³¹¹

According to Koester, the first stratum of the *Gospel of Thomas* represents a close companion to J. Kloppenborg's hypothesized initial sapiential stratum within the Q Gospel.³¹²

He explains this relationship as follows:

The materials which the *Gospel of Thomas* and Q share must belong to a very early stage of the transmission of Jesus' sayings. All of them fit well in the first composition of the Synoptic Sayings Source. In a few instances, a saying reflects Matthew's rather than Luke's working; in these instances, there are good reasons to believe that Matthew has preserved the original wording of Q. Thus, the *Gospel of Thomas* is either dependent upon the earliest version of Q or, more likely, shares with the author of Q one or several very early collections of Jesus' sayings.³¹³

Koester also asserts that the "prophetic sayings [which] are included [in *Thomas*] incorporate the wisdom material into the perspective of a realized eschatology, centered upon the presence of revelation in the words of Jesus."³¹⁴ In regard to the five parables that are common to both Q and *Thomas*,³¹⁵ Koester proposes that they "derive either from an early stage of Q or from an earlier collection which the compiler of Q also used."³¹⁶ He also suggests that this earlier collection was closest to the 'oral' period within the early Jesus movement.³¹⁷ In Koester's

³¹¹ For H. Koester, the compiler of the *Thomas* tradition was not interested in following a master plan: "The writer of the *Gospel of Thomas* is, in fact, not an author who deliberately composed his book according to a general master plan. He is rather a collector and a compiler who used a number of units collected sayings, some perhaps in written form, and composed them randomly. He shows no desire to express his own understanding of these sayings through the manner of composition." (*Ancient Christian Gospels*, 81-82).

³¹² Cf. Kloppenborg, J.S., *The Formation of Q*.

³¹³ Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 95.

³¹⁴ Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 95.

³¹⁵ I.e., Q 12:16-21 // *Thom* 68; Q 12:39 // *Thom* 21.2, 103; Q 13:18-19 // *Thom* 20; Q 13:20-21 // *Thom* 96; Q 14:16-24 // *Thom* 64; Q 15:3-7 // *Thom* 107.

³¹⁶ Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 99.

³¹⁷ Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 99.

estimation, this first stratum was originally a ‘wisdom collection’ and Jesus was presented as a sage, not the apocalyptic Son of Man. For Koester, the overall theme of the *Gospel of Thomas* is, like Davies, the pursuit of Wisdom: “They [the sayings] speak about human nature and destiny and, be extension, about the nature of the world and of the proper relationship to the world in which people dwell.”³¹⁸

A. DeConick challenges Koester’s model. In her estimation, there needs to be more than one author, as the diversity of the traditions within the Gospel are simply too different to have all derived from one compiler and one (or the same) redactor. DeConick calls for a more complex stratification involving more than one redaction because: “a *single* redaction is not enough to explain the large variety of traditions that make up this gospel.”³¹⁹ Additionally, the clear shifts in literary and thematic structure still require a more complex stratification theory.

T. Akagi

This ‘single redaction’ model was initially proposed by T. Akagi.³²⁰ According to Akagi, there was a “primitive collection of logia allegedly spoken by Jesus. This original document, it is further assumed, was composed before the middle of the second century by the Jewish-Christians who were residing in the city of Edessa in northeastern Syria.”³²¹ Akagi refers to this earlier form of *Thomas* as “Ur-Thomas.”³²² Accordingly, he asserts that this Ur-

³¹⁸ Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 124.

³¹⁹ DeConick, A.D., “The Original *Gospel of Thomas*,” 178.

³²⁰ Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*.

³²¹ Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, 121.

³²² Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, 121.

Thomas “seems to have contained most of the logia that are found in the present Coptic Gospel of Thomas.”³²³ Akagi lays out the following stratification proposal:

1) “During the first half of the second century, there were current among the Jewish-Christians in Edessa a number of ‘floating’ sayings ascribed to Jesus.”³²⁴ Akagi proposes that these initial sayings were collected into what became the first stratum of the *Gospel of Thomas*, or what he would term, ‘Ur-Thomas.’

2) “A copy of this ‘Ur-Thomas’ presumably soon found its way from Edessa to Alexandria Egypt. There it found itself among two types of Christians. One group of Christians had no difficulty in accepting the collections as it reached them..... The other group, however, consisted of those Egyptian Christians who had been exposed more radically, than those of the first group, to outside influences and various thought-currents. Consequently, they did not hesitate to make any change they pleased.”³²⁵

3) “At approximately A.D. 400, one of the copies of the ‘Oxyrhynchus Thomas,’ probably produced by the second group referred to above, fell into the hands of a person who was bilingual.”³²⁶ This person was then responsible for translating the text into Coptic.

According to Akagi, the only redactional material was to be identified in *Thomas* 16, 49, 61, 75, and 114.³²⁷ Though this initial literary analysis of the *Gospel of Thomas* was very important for the field, it failed to make sense of the other literary and thematic shifts that permeate the tradition, (which is explored in the Appendix to this dissertation). Furthermore,

³²³ Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, 121.

³²⁴ Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, 386.

³²⁵ Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, 389.

³²⁶ Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*. 390.

³²⁷ Akagi, T., *The Literary Development of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, 361-363.

one must wonder why *Thomas* 114 was considered redactional, while sayings like *Thomas* 15 and 105,³²⁸ which share the same theme, were not.

R.M. Wilson

It was R.M. Wilson³²⁹ who first proposed a number of redactions, rather than just one. For Wilson the first stratum consisted of a few authentic sayings of Jesus, then a redacted set of developed Jesus sayings (which were later than their canonical counterparts), then a series of sayings borrowed from the canonical Gospel tradition, and a final 'gnostic' redaction and introduction of new sayings. In his book, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas*, he surveys the relationship between the Thomasine sayings and the canonical material and concludes that many of the shared sayings could've been interpreted in either a 'gnostic' or canonical direction. Because, according to Wilson, *Thomas* does not appear to be aware of the *Gospel of John* he proposes that *Thomas* must've derived from a very early period in Christian history before the canon had acquired ecclesiastical authority.

Though Wilson proposes that the *Gospel of Thomas* has undergone a series of expansions by a later 'gnostic' redactor, he still believes that *Thomas* has much to offer the study of the canonical Gospels:

If *Thomas* is based on our Gospels, the study of these sayings will serve to show the later development of the tradition in a period when the fourfold canon of the Gospels had not yet attained to final authority. The variations of order, however, even when sayings are close to the Synoptic parallels, may be taken to suggest independent use of a common tradition, in which case we now have the means of controlling the tradition at an earlier stage of its development. *Thomas* would then provide confirmation of the reliability with which some sayings have been handed down in the canonical tradition, and examination of the

³²⁸ 15. Jesus said: "When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your faces and worship him. *That one is your Father.*"

105. Jesus said: "Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!"

³²⁹ Wilson, R.M., *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas*, (A.R. Mowbray & Co., London, 1960).

differences may enable us to discover the motives which were at work in the development, or to detect more clearly the editorial methods of the evangelists. The examples here discussed provide evidence of Gnostic adaptation and remoulding of parables, while other cases may perhaps show the construction of new parables on familiar Synoptic patterns. Where sayings are expanded in Thomas this version is often manifestly secondary, but sometimes the parallelism supports its authenticity, and where Thomas presents a shorter form it is frequently difficult to decide which is the more original. On the other hand there are some cases in which we seem to have a saying from some other part of the New Testament growing into a saying of Jesus. Each saying therefore must be examined by itself, but the study will advance our knowledge of the background of thought and the editorial methods of those who handed down the earliest tradition. And if Thomas does in fact supply an indication of the kind of materials upon which the evangelists had to work, this study cannot but increase our admiration for the skill with which they fulfilled their task.³³⁰

Though Wilson's work was important for the development of redaction theory for the *Gospel of Thomas*, it was not a literary analysis, but an analysis based on a certain meta-narrative of Christian beginnings that presumed a coherent 'gnostic' apparatus. There is no mention of Sophia, Barbelo, emanations of the aeons, or any other 'gnostic' or biblical demiurgical traditions in *Thomas* -- so to presume a 'gnostic' background is to depend on an external meta-narrative rather than the text of *Thomas* itself.

Two Recent Theories: W. Arnal and A. DeConick

Though DeConick's categorization of the past stratification models for *Thomas* are persuasive,³³¹ I think scholarship over the past two decades has a clearer division between 1) a Q-like redaction model and 2) a model committed to a certain meta-narrative for Christian

³³⁰ Wilson, R. McL., "Thomas" and the Growth of the Gospels, *The Harvard Theological Review* Vol. 53, No. 4 (1960), 231-250; 247-248.

³³¹ These are as follows:

- 1) The 'Literate Model' -- which G. Quispel follows, assuming only *written* sources behind *Thomas*.
- 2) The 'Oral-Literate Model' -- which admits both written and oral sources behind *Thomas*.
- 3) The 'Redaction Model' -- which postulates a redaction of earlier core material.

Cf. DeConick, A.D., "The Original *Gospel of Thomas*," chapter two.

Origins.³³² Two recent stratigraphic proposals have presented the scholarly community with both the merits and inefficiencies of applying a Q-like redaction critical strategy to the *Gospel of Thomas*. W.E. Arnal in "The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels"³³³ proposed a stratigraphic analysis of the *Gospel of Thomas* based on the method J.S. Kloppenborg developed in his seminal work, *the Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom*.³³⁴ Arnal offered a bi-strata picture of the social development of *Thomas*: the first consisting of "wisdom sayings,"³³⁵ and the second, sayings of "gnostic orientation."³³⁶ In contrast to Arnal's dependence on Kloppenborg's stratigraphic analysis of Q, DeConick in her groundbreaking work, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and its Growth*,³³⁷ explicitly challenges this dependence, writing that she is "very reluctant to theorize about the nature of particular stratifications of a minimally reconstructed hypothetical document and then to further theorize about their alleged ramifications for understanding the composition of the *Gospel of Thomas*."³³⁸ What is ironic about this statement is that DeConick herself, like Quispel before her, depends quite heavily on a number "minimally reconstructed

³³² J. Dunn, for example, assumes that "Q is almost certainly earlier and nearer to Jesus' emphasis than any non-apocalyptic version of the Jesus-tradition" in: *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 286. With such a presupposition, it is quite difficult to approach *Thomas* as anything but a later 'corruption' or departure from the 'Earliest Christianity.' This is an unfortunate position.

³³³ Arnal, W. E., "The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels," *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 88 No. 4 (1995), 471-494.

³³⁴ Kloppenborg, J.S., *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

³³⁵ Arnal, W.E., "The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels," 476.

³³⁶ Arnal, W.E., "The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels," 478.

³³⁷ DeConick, April D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and its Growth* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005).

³³⁸ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 54.

hypothetical” documents and meta-narratives from the so-called Jewish-Christian tradition. As discussed above and in the previous chapter, the category of Jewish-Christianity is quite nebulous and not well suited as a meta-narrative interpretive context for the *Gospel of Thomas*. Koester too agrees with this asserting that “a label such as *Jewish-Christian* is misleading, since everyone in the first generation of Christianity was a Jewish-Christian; both Jewish traditions and Jewish thought (not to speak of the Old Testament) continued to exert considerable influence upon almost all developments of early Christian theology for a long time.”³³⁹

DeConick proposes, rather, to “develop a compositional history *for the Gospel of Thomas out of the Gospel of Thomas*, to listen to its own voice first.”³⁴⁰ Unlike Arnal and Kloppenborg, DeConick depends on a particular Jewish-Christian-Apocalyptic meta-narrative of Christian beginnings for *Gospel of Thomas*. It is in this sense that DeConick is the true heir to Quispel’s legacy. DeConick, in contrast to Arnal, suggests that “[t]here was no orality *behind Thomas*. *Thomas* was *orally-derived*. That is, it emerged as *an oral text*.”³⁴¹ DeConick claims that “the Redaction model as it has been formulated reflects too much the modern literate imagination and not enough the ancient oral consciousness.”³⁴² She declares that “the moment has arrived to set aside our literate imaginations and develop a model that echoes the voices of antiquity.”³⁴³ Arnal offers a similar proposal, writing that “[u]ntil scholars can establish some

³³⁹ Koester, H., “GNOMAI DIAPHOROI,” 115.

³⁴⁰ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 54. Emphasis original.

³⁴¹ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 55.

³⁴² DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 54.

³⁴³ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 55.

basis for the comparison of social contexts, and wrest the debate from the monopoly of literary hypotheses, more sophisticated theorizing cannot even begin to gain a foothold.”³⁴⁴

Arnal’s stratification of *Thomas* assumes J. Kloppenborg’s stratification of Q. Arnal writes the following concerning this point:

No comparable work exists on the *Gospel of Thomas*. Thus the confidence shown in assigning material to Q₁, Q₂, and Q₃ has not been shown in designating particular materials in the *Gospel of Thomas* as “formative” or “redactional.” The *Gospel of Thomas* lacks the organizational structure so evident in Q, and thus is not as amenable to the kind of redactional analysis that makes Kloppenborg’s stratification so convincing.³⁴⁵

Kloppenborg’s multifaceted method of literary analysis in his book, *The Formation of Q*, identified the major redaction in the Q document. He succeeded in identifying three layers in Q, which he designated as Q₁, Q₂, and Q₃. Kloppenborg connected the formative sapiential stratum (Q₁) to the ancient instruction genre and the second stratum (Q₂), to an emerging reactionary posture proclaiming judgment on “this generation” in the voice of Hebrew prophets and the deuteronomistic theology that accompanied them. In the third stratum (Q₃) he identified a layer that presented Jesus as a teacher of unparalleled ability and near-divine attributes, as expressed in the temptation narrative that frames the complete Q Gospel. His stratagraphic methodology identifies and organizes the following³⁴⁶:

- A. Repetitive elements in the major redaction
 - a. Motifs
 - b. Formulas
 - c. Vocabulary
- B. Sub-collections
 - a. Juxtaposition of formerly independent sayings
- C. Purposeful juxtaposition
 - a. Catchwords

³⁴⁴ Arnal, “Rhetoric,” 474.

³⁴⁵ Arnal, “Rhetoric,” 474-475.

³⁴⁶ Kloppenborg, J.S., *Excavating Q*, chapter three.

- b. Thematic groupings
 - c. Pragmatic unity – (i.e. the same communicative event)
- D. Amplification of individual sayings
 - a. Addition of secondary expansions
 - b. Commentary words
 - c. Condensation of sayings
- E. Implied Audience
 - a. Towards the inner circle of disciples or the greater world
- F. Characteristic Forms
 - a. Anachronistic “I speech”
 - b. Beatitudes
 - c. Pronouncements
 - d. Dialogues

What makes Kloppenborg’s stratification so convincing is its demonstration that the deuteronomistic layer in Q_2 *depended* on the sapiential layer in Q_1 , rather than the reverse. If one begins with a formative layer, one inevitably privileges a particular group of sayings and thereby unintentionally determines the trajectory of the stratification theory from the outset. What Kloppenborg proved was that when one removed the deuteronomistic (or: judgment) material in Q_2 , the sapiential material in Q_1 remained intact and could stand as a singular and coherent document. When, however, one removed the Q_1 material from the tradition, the material in Q_2 did not retain a coherent and intact presentation. The conclusion to be drawn was that the Q_2 material *depended* on the Q_1 material, which demonstrated that the Q_2 material, on a purely literary level, was elaborative and posterior to the formative material in Q_1 .

W. Arnal’s Stratification of the Gospel of Thomas

When Arnal turns to the consideration of “*Thomas* as a stratified document,” he offers this point of departure: “A fundamental prerequisite to describing the social context of Q and the *Gospel of Thomas* is the recognition that the context has changed: both documents are products of social history rather than static social context.”³⁴⁷ He sees evidence of this

³⁴⁷ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 474.

“changed context” in the “considerable degree of formal and thematic inconsistency... Taken alone, this inconsistency suggests that the *Gospel of Thomas* is a composite, in that the traditions comprised in the document derive from various provenances.”³⁴⁸ Arnal identifies “two main strains of material”³⁴⁹ within *Thomas*: the first, formal and thematic postures associated with the “wisdom genre,” which he identifies as parables, imperatives with motive clauses, simple and thematically clustered aphorisms and beatitudes.³⁵⁰ Beyond the formal comparisons, Arnal suggest that this sapiential stratum is also thematically coherent. He arrives at this conclusion by recognizing that “[a]ll, or nearly all, of the observations made in this vein are inversionary (without being esoteric) while they also appeal to common sense and wise observation.”³⁵¹

The second strain of material, according to Arnal, is one “characterized by a gnostic orientation.”³⁵² Arnal argues that this gnostic proclivity is “manifested most trenchantly in their invocation of gnostic mythological motifs.”³⁵³ The evidence Arnal uses to support this position is outlined in a footnote as follows:

Logion 101, for example, advises that one both hate father and mother... and love father and mother, explaining this contradiction by appealing to a distinction between “mother” and “true mother.” Since God is the obvious referent for “father,” Sophia, God’s divine consort, is here presented as Jesus’ true mother and has a soteriological function.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁸ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 475.

³⁴⁹ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 476.

³⁵⁰ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 476.

³⁵¹ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 476.

³⁵² Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 478.

³⁵³ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 478.

³⁵⁴ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 478, footnote 18.

The other pieces of evidence for this 'gnostic strain' of material are listed as follows:

- 1) "[D]eliberate obscurity and corollary use of extratextual points of reference."³⁵⁵
- 2) "[N]amed disciples and a tendency toward the dialogue form"³⁵⁶
- 3) "[T]he deliberate obfuscation of a saying's meaning by repeating the same or similar word but with different meanings"³⁵⁷
- 4) "[P]airing, rather than clustering of related sayings"
- 5) Deeper reading, or what Arnal terms "a hermeneutic of penetration"³⁵⁸

Beyond these formal considerations, Arnal also proposes a number of vocabularies and themes that he identifies with a gnostic trajectory, including: becoming one, single, alone, primordial unity, the end, the living, repose, consumption, light, and drinking from Jesus' mouth.³⁵⁹

Arnal asserts that "these specific features all derive from a single redaction" because they are all "aggregate[ed] within single sayings."³⁶⁰ Arnal relegates this "gnostic-leaning stratum" to a redactional status on "three bases."³⁶¹ First, he assumes that wisdom oriented collections naturally develop toward gnosticism. Second, Arnal argues that the framing logia, which proffer a "hermeneutic of penetration," make possible the 'gnosticization' of the other

³⁵⁵ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 478.

³⁵⁶ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 478.

³⁵⁷ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 478.

³⁵⁸ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 479.

³⁵⁹ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 478-479.

³⁶⁰ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 479.

³⁶¹ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 479.

sayings. Third, the obvious secondary nature of the glosses, refer, according to Arnal, to 'gnostic' mythology.

Arnal's work has served the scholarly community well by actually proposing a set of clear strata operating within the *Gospel of Thomas*. His work has also demonstrated the merits of a redaction analysis like the one performed by Kloppenborg on the hypothesized Q Gospel. However, there are a number of problems with Arnal's thesis. The two most prominent are:

1) An assumption that Kloppenborg's reconstruction of Q₁ informs the first stratum of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

2) An uncritical commitment to a particular category of 'gnosticism.'

Contrary to Arnal's assertion that *Thomas* 101 is "characterized by a gnostic orientation,"³⁶² there is actually no explicit identification of "mother" with Sophia here, nor is she ever mentioned in the text. If anything, what *Thomas* 101 exhibits is a softening of a rather 'hard saying' of Jesus. The mother, as in early Christian Syrian literature (cf. the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Gospel of Philip*, etc.) could also be a reference to the Holy Spirit, which is feminine in Syriac. I see no need to assume a gnostic mythology here, unless it is explicitly stated.

Arnal's association of "named disciples and a tendency toward the dialogue form"³⁶³ with gnosticism is rather peculiar. Though there are "named disciples" in what are typically considered 'gnostic' dialogues (e.g., the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*), there are also named disciples in the 'non-gnostic' canonical gospels. Additionally, the 'dialogue form' is certainly not monopolized by the 'gnostic' or biblical demiurgical ethos. The dialogue form is also the

³⁶² Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 478.

101.1 Jesus said: "Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother in the same way I do, cannot be a [disciple] of mine."

101.2 And whoever does not love his father and his mother in the same way I do, cannot be a disciple of mine.

101.3 For my mother [birthed my body], but my true [mother] gave me life.

³⁶³ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 478.

provenance of the *chreia* elaborations³⁶⁴ and the canonical gospels (in addition to a variety of others). Arnal also suggests that “the deliberate obfuscation of a saying’s meaning by repeating the same or similar word but with different meanings”³⁶⁵ should be associated with gnosticism. I don’t see any reason to read ‘gnostic’ or biblical demiurgical mythology into a repetitive and hermeneutically-altered word. Words change meaning for a variety of reasons, and the allegorical reinvestment of new meaning is hardly the sole domain of the biblical demiurgist or ‘gnostic.’

Arnal also considers the “pairing, rather than clustering of related sayings” to be evidence of a ‘gnostic’ orientation. However, this rests on the unsupported assumption that the sayings were intentionally paired with sayings that did *not* influence the meanings. Again, just because we moderns don’t understand the logic behind the juxtaposition of sayings does not mean that there was no rhyme or reason. I have come to recognize an ingenious and unexpected logic behind many of the pairings (which is outlined in the Appendix to this dissertation). They are unexpected and, perhaps, not the way I would pair them, but they are still paired *in order to* produce a particular meaning (or experience) for the reader or listener -- and I find no decisive evidence that suggests that these meanings are ‘gnostic’ or biblical demiurgical in orientation. Deeper reading, or what Arnal terms “a hermeneutic of penetration”³⁶⁶ is hardly the sole possession of gnosticism.

Arnal also offers a barrage of vocabulary and themes that he identifies with a gnostic trajectory, including: becoming one, single, alone, primordial unity, the end, the living, repose,

³⁶⁴ See the Appendix to this dissertation for discussion of this literary/rhetorical form.

³⁶⁵ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 478.

³⁶⁶ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 479.

consumption, light, and drinking from Jesus' mouth.³⁶⁷ The associations of 'becoming one' or 'single,' or 'alone,' could very well be associated with a celibate life that is not associated with gnosticism (like the Syrians discussed in the previous chapter). Speculation about 'primordial unity' is shared by first century Jews and the Christian theologians of the Patristic age.³⁶⁸ If "Salvation in terms of the avoidance of death" and "the nomenclature of 'living' and or 'repose'" is the possession of the 'gnostic,' then the *Gospel of John* is also 'gnostic.' Each of these motifs play prominently in the *Gospel of John*. Additionally, "references to light" and "drinking from Jesus' mouth" are common throughout the ancient world. 'Light' is a basic cosmological and theological term shared by a plethora of traditions, and the 'drinking from Jesus' mouth' can as easily refer to the teacher-disciple relationship -- as Peter said in the John 6:68: "To whom shall I go, you have the words of eternal life." None of these identifications by Arnal are the sole possession of 'gnosticism,' or biblical demiurgism. Nor are they to be considered 'gnostic' by their existence all together in one document.

Arnal claims that "these specific features all derive from a single redaction" because they are all "aggregate[ed] within single sayings."³⁶⁹ However, it is not that simple. Many of the traditions that I associate with the major redaction of *Thomas* in the Appendix to this dissertation and chapter three are interspersed with earlier material. Consider, for example, the differing traditions juxtaposed in *Thomas* 61:

³⁶⁷ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 478-479.

³⁶⁸ Cf. Bouteneff, P.C., *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2008); Davies, S., "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (1992), 663-682; Pagels, E., "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 118, No. 3 (1999), 477-496.

³⁶⁹ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 479.

61.1 Jesus said: "**Two will recline on a couch – one will die, another other will live!**"³⁷⁰

61.2 Salome said: "Who are you (to say such things) while you recline upon my couch and eat from my table?"

Jesus said to her: "I derive from the One who is equal (to all). I was (merely) given (by you) that which is my Father's."

"I am your disciple."

61.3 *Because of this, I say: "When a person becomes <equal> that person will be full of light."*

As outlined above, Arnal relegates this "gnostic-leaning stratum" to a redactional status on "three bases."³⁷¹ First, he assumes that wisdom oriented collections naturally develop toward gnosticism. However, there is simply very little (if any) evidence of this phenomenon. Second, Arnal argues that the framing logia, which proffer a "hermeneutic of penetration," make possible the 'gnosticization' of the other sayings. While, I agree that the framing logia alter the text as a whole, I do not associate 'deeper readings' with gnosticism or biblical demiurgism. Reading 'deeply' is shared amongst a wider variety of religious expressions. Third, the obvious secondary nature of the glosses refer, according to Arnal, to 'gnostic' mythology. Again, however, there is nothing amongst these different glosses that is explicitly 'gnostic' or biblical demiurgical.

In order support this third basis, Arnal offers *Thomas* 16 as evidence:

16.1 Jesus said: "Perhaps people think that it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world. But they do not know that is rebellion that I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, war!"

16.2 *For* there will be five within a household: three against two, and two against three -- father against son, and son against father.

16.3 *And they will stand solitary.*

³⁷⁰ The bold here indicates an earlier tradition. For a fuller description see the Appendix.

³⁷¹ Arnal, W.E., "Rhetoric," 479.

Arnal believes that the primary saying in *Thomas* 16 “belongs firmly within the wisdom stratum and makes sense entirely within that stratum.”³⁷² While I agree that the final phrase is elaborative, I am curious as to why Arnal so confidently places *Thomas* 16 in the “wisdom stratum.” In J. Kloppenborg’s stratification of Q, this saying (Q 12:49-53) is associated with the major redaction in Q₂ precisely because it is not part of the wisdom stratum.³⁷³ So why is it now “firmly” set within the wisdom stratum in *Thomas*? I believe this reveals the complexity involved in *Thomas*’ stratification. It is not as simple as Arnal proposes. Either Q 12:49-53// *Thomas* 16 is a wisdom saying or it is not. And if it is not, then Kloppenborg may have been correct in his warning that “tradition history is not transferable with literary history.”³⁷⁴

The existence of sayings in *Thomas* that are considered redactional in Q presents a whole range of issues for the scholar. Did these ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘spiritualizing’ sayings circulate independently of and before their use in Q₂? Did Q₂ ‘apocalypticize’ or ‘deuteronomize’³⁷⁵ sayings that once carried different meanings? These issues suggest that what Arnal considers a formally and thematically coherent first sapiential stratum in *Thomas* may actually not be very coherent. For within his first stratum exists the very same unevenness and inconsistency that alerted Q scholarship to the stratified nature of Q. In sum, Arnal’s stratification proposal inaugurates the investigation of a Q-like redactional analysis of *Thomas*, which is a laudable contribution. Its inefficiencies are manifest in five points: 1) the application of the rather dubious and imprecise category of ‘gnosticism’ to make sense of

³⁷² Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 479.

³⁷³ Cf. Kloppenborg, J.S., *The Formation of Q*, 102-170.

³⁷⁴ Kloppenborg, J.S., “The Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 89, no. 4 (1996), 322, footnote 70.

³⁷⁵ That is, follow the theology proposed in the book of *Deuteronomy*.

material that invites a ‘hermeneutic of penetration’; 2) the assumption that certain literary forms naturally evolve toward ‘gnostic’ speculation; 3) the belief that the vocabulary of “singleness,” the “avoidance of death,” the “nomenclature of ‘living,’” the “metaphor of consumption,” “drinking from Jesus’ mouth,” and “references to light”³⁷⁶ are indicative of ‘gnosticizing’ spirituality, when there are more precise parallels in other non-gnostic literature (as will be shown in chapter three); 4) the thematic and formal incoherence in what he identifies as the “wisdom stratum,” and 5) the existence of non-‘gnostic’ apocalyptic or judgment material within the first stratum. Beyond these inefficiencies, however, Arnal has demonstrated that *Thomas* is amenable to a Q-like redactional analysis. Arnal’s investigation assumed Kloppenborg’s identification of Q₁ as representative of earliest Christianity, and therefore “peeled away” what he considered ‘gnostic.’ The next step along this promising trajectory inaugurated by Arnal is the *application* of Kloppenborg’s method to *Thomas* as it stands, *without assuming* the primacy of Q₁. One must, so to speak, act as if Q didn’t exist. Doing so will ensure a literary analysis designed for *Thomas*.

A. DeConick’s Stratification of the Gospel of Thomas

As previously mentioned, DeConick’s work represents a significant departure from Arnal’s theory and methodology. DeConick, however, does agree with Arnal that *Thomas* is “an aggregate text, [and] an accumulation of traditions and their interpretations” which contained “old core traditions to which material accrued over time.”³⁷⁷ She labors to distinguish her project from the redaction-critical tradition by declaring that this accretion process took place within “the oral registry,” and that “the traditions were not *mainly*

³⁷⁶ Arnal, W.E., “Rhetoric,” 478-479.

³⁷⁷ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 64.

developed by a redactor with a pen in hand. Rather, the oral *and* written traditions which they collected were gathered and adapted *mainly* in the process of the oral reperformance and recreation of the words of Jesus over the entire life of the community..."³⁷⁸ She presents the "initial scribing" of the *Thomas* tradition as a "small written gospel of oracles of the prophet Jesus," which she terms the "Kernel *Thomas*."³⁷⁹

DeConick then uses this "Kernel *Thomas*" to introduce a new genre distinction that she terms a "speech gospel"; she does acknowledge, however, that *Thomas* is "our only extant speech gospel."³⁸⁰ DeConick also proposes that *Thomas* remained a "text that was always subject to oral consciousness, even when it moved in and out of written formats."³⁸¹ She supports the introduction of this new genre by citing Clement's claim in the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature that he "listened to Peter's exposition of Jesus' teachings... and afterwards compiled them in writing so that they could be 'read' to proselytites and interpreted orally by the preacher."³⁸² DeConick asserts that *Thomas*' "brief discourses have a narrative quality in that they are short speech blocks in which Jesus responds directly to a question or situation with sage advice."³⁸³

Beyond the considerations of *Thomas*' genre, DeConick offers a carefully structured stratification method for the *Gospel of Thomas*. She begins with a search for "accretive developments" by identifying the following: 1) "reflective changes to the older traditional

³⁷⁸ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 64.

³⁷⁹ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 64.

³⁸⁰ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 65.

³⁸¹ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 64.

³⁸² DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 64-65.

³⁸³ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 65.

material”; 2) “interpretive clauses [that] are appended to older sentences”; 3) “sentences of Jesus [that] have been reshaped into *rhetorical* question and answer units”; 4) “sayings [that] have been reformed as *retrospective* dialogues.”³⁸⁴ After setting out these principles she suggests that the investigator should collect and “identify vocabulary and themes characteristic of the accretive material.”³⁸⁵

After collecting and identifying these ‘accretions,’ DeConick moves to consider what might have brought them about. She identifies the following three crises that precipitated the elaboration and accretion of new material: 1) “the death of the eyewitnesses,” 2) “the delay of the Eschaton,” and 3) “the accommodation of Gentile converts to the community.”³⁸⁶ DeConick further proposes “that sayings in *Thomas* which reflect the crises within the broader Christian community probably entered the collection contemporaneous to the time when other communities were experiencing similar crises.”³⁸⁷

DeConick’s work has succeeded in persuasively identifying redactional material in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Her method is by far the most detailed and systematic in comparison to previous stratification proposals. Though DeConick’s method and stratification proposal is both sound and persuasive there are a number of places where it stands to be amended or clarified.

The final piece in DeConick’s method is what seems most problematic: “the logia that remain must be examined for references that are anachronistic to the first Christians and are

³⁸⁴ Adapted from *Ibid.*, 65

³⁸⁵ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 65.

³⁸⁶ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 85.

³⁸⁷ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 85.

representative of later Christian thought and practice.”³⁸⁸ It is not that this methodological principle doesn’t make sense; the issue involves our abilities to discern exactly what early Christians believed. First, the historical record indicates a great diversity of both expression and belief within the early Jesus movements. Second, this diversity was not only emergent but, in a sense, primordial -- that is, those who listened to the historical Jesus and recorded his sayings interpreted them in, at times, very different ways. Third, if the “kernel” of the *Gospel of Thomas* represents one of the earliest recordings of Jesus’ teachings and their appropriation, as DeConick believes, then the project is not served well by contextualizing *Thomas* within a meta-narrative of Christian beginnings that it may not actually share. If one holds, as DeConick does, that the early Jesus Movement (and the historical Jesus for that matter) was entirely invested in the impending apocalypse, then that person’s interpretation of the earliest “kernel” *Thomas* would certainly be overtly apocalyptic. If the first stratum of *Thomas* is as early as Q,³⁸⁹ then we must allow *Thomas* to present its own unique form of ‘Christianity,’ and not merely be read in the presentations of other early Christian texts.

DeConick claims that the “impact of the death of the eyewitnesses cannot be overrated since, because of this, all Christian communities faced the reality of losing their memories.”³⁹⁰ Though this may be a real possibility, I don’t think the evidence speaks to this. The attribution of authorship in many, if not most, early Christian texts remains debatable and uncertain. Q, for example, seems to have existed for an extended period of time without authorial attribution. There was also no reference to the importance of an “eyewitness account.” The question of authenticity and authority does not appear to be a major interest in Q₁ or early

³⁸⁸ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 65.

³⁸⁹ See the discussion of this comparison in chapter four.

³⁹⁰ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 86.

Thomas.³⁹¹ Furthermore, A. DeConick relegates both the incipit and logion 13 of *Thomas* to one of the accretion stages, which retains the *only* reference to the Apostle Thomas in the text, and yet locates the influence of this later phenomenon in the earliest stage. The *Gospel of Thomas* does not evince this concern for the “death of the eyewitnesses” contextual application, and therefore should not be used in the delineation of strata. We simply cannot assume this context from the start without more specific evidence from the *Gospel of Thomas* itself.

DeConick writes that “[i]n oral cultures, the death of the eyewitnesses, along with war which the Christians also faced during the same period when the mother Church in Jerusalem was destroyed, are two of the main reasons why people set down their memories in writing.”³⁹² However, there is little (if any) evidence of a Jerusalem base for the genesis of the *Thomas* tradition. This proposal appears to embrace Quispel’s assumption that *Thomas* was part of the Jewish-Christian Jamesian trajectory inaugurated in Jerusalem.

I assume that DeConick’s primary support for this position derives from mention of James in *Thomas* 12. However, as presented above, this saying does not support a Jerusalem based “mother Church” for *Thomas*. According to DeConick, the disciples’ questions are to be considered glosses, and therefore accretions. Thus, by her methodology the only ‘semi-authentic’ saying in *Thomas* 12 is the clause referring to James the Righteous. It seems unlikely, though not impossible, that James, Jesus’ own brother, was referred to as “the Righteous” by Jesus himself. This seems to be a retroactive ascription to James as he emerged

³⁹¹ Consider the *Gospel of John*, for example. It circulated for a significant period of time *without* attribution of specific authorship. The question of appropriate or authentic authorship is more generally an issue in the second century.

³⁹² DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 87.

as one of the pillars within the early Church.³⁹³ There is little doubt that James was an immensely important and influential early Christian leader, but there is no concrete evidence that suggests that the authorial community of *Thomas* considered him as their founder or representative. The disciples' questions in *Thomas* always serve as foils for the insights of the responses. Consider the framing logia: *Thomas* 11 declares, "This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away," and Jesus, in *Thomas* 13, tells Thomas, "I am *not* your teacher." So the question of "who will lead us" by the disciples in *Thomas* 12 is misplaced. If Jesus is not the master or leader what replacement is needed? Secondly, if *Thomas* 11 announces the dissolution of the "heavens and earth," then James' attached honorary statement, "for whose sake heaven and earth came into being," is less powerful. I cannot help but read a Thomasine *parodying* of James' leadership position in the early church. Considering that Jesus is not the "leader" in *Thomas* 12, and also that the "leaders" are those that misguide in *Thomas* 3, it seems rather ironic that Jesus would exhort the disciples to follow James as leader for who's sake the "heaven and earth" have come into being, which Jesus just claimed he would "cast fire upon" (*Thomas* 10) and will "pass away" (*Thomas* 11). There is nothing that the Apostle James is associated with in other early Christian literature and tradition (i.e. circumcision, food laws, fasting etc.) that *Thomas* encourages. The *Gospel of Thomas* actively diminishes the importance of circumcision, almsgiving, fasting, prayer, and food laws.

The question, then, is whether this parodying of James should be interpreted as a *response* to a certain tradition that the authorial community was aware of or a tradition that the community once *embraced*. Again, it is important to stress that response does not equate prior adherence and support. *Thomas* has taken a saying that circulated in the emerging Christian

³⁹³ Cf. Mack, B., *Who Wrote the New Testament?*, especially chapter nine.

world and carefully responded to it by dismantling it with a ‘deeper’ and perhaps comedic hermeneutic. Many of the questions of the disciples, which DeConick also identifies as accretions, are responding to other (possibly contemporaneous) beliefs and dismantling them. The logia that frame *Thomas* 12 suggest that the authorial community was uncomfortable with this saying. They did not dispute its purported ‘authenticity’ but, rather, its interpretation. *Thomas* is a playful tradition, and here we witness the authorial community interpreting Jesus speaking about James with a wink in the eye. It seems most likely that *Thomas* was *responding* to this position, *not* demonstrating its former support and adherence to it. Even if this assessment is entirely wrong here, I, again, do not think that there is enough evidence from the saying in *Thomas* 12 to locate *Thomas* along a Jamesian-Jewish-Christian trajectory. What I see, rather, are two divergent emerging Christian traditions responding to each other (much like the way the Petrine tradition responds to the Pauline and Jamesian traditions). *Thomas* may be yet another emerging Christian tradition trying to elbow its way to legitimacy.

The second “crisis” that precipitated the accretions in DeConick’s view is most problematic. She identifies the “delay of the Eschaton” as the main impetus behind sayings “3, 18, 20.1, 22, 27.1, 37, 38.2, 49, 51, 59 111.2, [and] 113.”³⁹⁴ DeConick claims that the delay of the Eschaton “caused a critical rethinking and severe overhaul of the theology of the Thomasine community, pushing its members to return to the Jewish scripture, in particular Genesis 1-3, and develop a specific exegetical tradition.”³⁹⁵ There are two initial problems with this position: first, there is very little evidence of the authorial community’s use of the Jewish scriptures outside *Thomas* 21.8, 38.1, and 66. Nor is there much evidence suggesting

³⁹⁴ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 87.

³⁹⁵ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 87.

that the speculations about “the beginning” derive specifically from a textual analysis as opposed to a more general awareness of the Genesis narrative (as there are no clear quotations). Second, DeConick again assumes that a critique of a position (in this case the delay of the Eschaton) implies a former adherence to it. If the ‘Non-Event’ of the apocalypse was registered as a true concern of the *Gospel of Thomas*, one could perhaps follow DeConick’s proposal, but it does not seem that this was a primary concern for the *Gospel of Thomas*. The judgment traditions in the *Gospel of Thomas* represent the smallest thematic layer in the extant text.³⁹⁶ *Thomas* never becomes overwhelmingly interested in the apocalypse. The apocalypse is never explicitly referred to in *Thomas*, and therefore it should not be assumed as a context for the text as a whole, as DeConick does.

The only four sayings that could be used to suggest a strong apocalyptic orientation to the Gospel are the following:

10. Jesus said: “I have cast fire upon the world. And behold! I watch over it until it burns.”

11.1 Jesus said: “This heaven will pass away and the one above it will pass away.”

16.1 Jesus said: “Perhaps people think that it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world. But they do not know that is rebellion that I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, war!”

111.1 Jesus said: “The heavens and earth will be rolled up (right) before you.”

These four traditions probably circulated independently before being inserted in *Thomas*, as they are all paralleled in Q as well.³⁹⁷ However, these four traditions do not necessitate an apocalyptic reading: in each instance the given saying could be operating metaphorically

³⁹⁶ See the Appendix for a discussion of this material.

³⁹⁷ Q 12:49-51; 16:17

rather than explicitly.³⁹⁸ DeConick's work begins with these four sayings as *the* context for the rest of the Gospel, but fails to account for the small number of instances of similar material in *Thomas* as a whole. DeConick's stratification proceeds along a particular eschatological meta-narrative of Christian beginnings that uses the Thomasine sayings as support for this assumed apocalyptic meta-narrative. Anything that departs from this eschatological meta-narrative is considered secondary.

The other 'apocalyptic' sayings that DeConick requires for her apocalyptic thesis are extant anti-apocalyptic sayings transformed into apocalyptic sayings. I am, however, quite skeptical about our ability to be sure of such hypothetical retroversions -- especially when it comes to using these apocalypticized retroversions to contextualize the 'original *Gospel of Thomas*.' Another issue with DeConick's appropriation of *Thomas* 10 and 11 in her delineation of the first stratum³⁹⁹ is that it violates one of her methodological principles. DeConick has suggested "the logia that remain [after initial stratification] must be examined for references that are anachronistic to the first Christians and are representative of later Christian thought and practice."⁴⁰⁰ Perhaps it is possible to consider *Thomas* 10 as anachronistic because it looks

³⁹⁸ U.K. Plisch writes that, "Unfortunately, it is not easy to infer the meaning of the perhaps genuine Jesus logion. Within the synoptic tradition, there is only this parallel in Luke 12:49; the connection to the context there (Luke 12:50 and 12:51-53 parallel Matt 10:34-36) comes perhaps only from the author of Luke himself. Interestingly, Luke 12:51 has a parallel in *Gos. Thom.* 16 where in turn (unlike in Luke 12:51, parallel Matt 10:34) the catchword 'fire' appears. As well as Saying 16, Saying 82, where Jesus also talks about fire (there Coptic: *state*), belongs to this range of interpretation within the *Gospel of Thomas*. On the one hand, 'fire' is a broadly circulating metaphor for the future (divine) judgment (Matt 3:10-12 and parallels, Matt 13:40, and passim). On the other hand, it is a metaphor for a temporal inner-worldly punishment connected to the purification aspect (Sach 13:9, 1 Pet 1:7, Rev 3:18; in contemporary Jewish language also by Josephus, *Ant.* 20.166=20.8.5)... In this sense, the version in the *Gospel of Thomas* can be paraphrased as follows: Jesus has cast upon the earth the spark of the purifying fire that separates those who follow him and those who reject him, and he is guiding this (still small) flame (so that it is not put out), until it is set ablaze to a great fire which is all-consuming." (Plisch, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 57-58). Pkorný notes both the literal interpretations and metaphorical interpretations in *Thomas* 11 (cf. Pkorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas*, 51).

³⁹⁹ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 117-118.

⁴⁰⁰ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 65.

back on the career or mission of Jesus and attempts to redefine his purpose. This form of declaration is significantly different from the aphoristic wisdom that permeates much of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

If early *Thomas* was initially apocalyptic in focus, then anti-apocalyptic, then one must make sense of the apocalyptic turn in the next 'edition' of the Thomasine corpus in the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. What would motivate a community to move from apocalyptic, then away from it, and then back to it? Consider the following apocalyptic-leaning saying in the *Book of Thomas*:

141.14-18. Only a little while longer, and that which is visible will dissolve; then shapeless shades will emerge, and in the midst of tombs they will forever dwell upon the corpses in pain and corruption of soul.⁴⁰¹

What would motivate the community (assuming they are related) to return to the above sentiment after having rejected it? My five objections to DeConick's theory of an early apocalyptic *Thomas* 'speech gospel' are as follows: first, the use of retroversions (i.e. the apocalypticizing of extant anti-apocalyptic sayings) to redefine *Thomas* is a dubious enterprise, which is especially susceptible to the augmentation of one scholar's contextual choice; second, the retroactive and anachronistic nature of these apocalyptic sayings (e.g. *Thomas* 10 and 16) suggests an elaborative and/or redactional derivation; third, the sapiential material significantly outnumbers what DeConick considers the overtly apocalyptic material; fourth, DeConick overemphasizes the potency of this apocalyptic material, which leads her to read sapiential material from an apocalyptic perspective rather than a more natural sapiential perspective; fifth, the move from apocalyptic to anti-apocalyptic and back to the apocalyptic in the later Thomasine tradition is difficult to make sense of historically.

⁴⁰¹ J.D. Turner's translation.

The third “crisis” that precipitated the accretions, according to DeConick, was the “accommodation of gentile converts.”⁴⁰² Here again DeConick has allowed her own particular meta-narrative of Christian beginnings to dictate the stratification and interpretation of the *Gospel of Thomas*. There is no explicit reference to the influx of gentile converts in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Broadly speaking, there are no references to conversion. Nor is there any clear declaration of ‘mission’ for the apostles, save possibly the instructions in *Thomas* 14.2.⁴⁰³ In contrast to DeConick’s assumption here, *Thomas* does not seem to be concerned with this ‘crisis’ at all. *Thomas* never claims that the community used to circumcise, it merely finds the practice unimportant *for the entire community*:

53.1 His disciples said to him: “Is circumcision beneficial or not for us?” He said to them: “If it were beneficial their father would beget them circumcised from their mother.”

53.2 *Rather*, true circumcision in Spirit is entirely profitable.

I sense no “accommodation” here. The second clause appears to be elaborative, but the first evinces what could be interpreted as a witty aphoristic retort. Consider also Jesus’ rejoinder in *Thomas* 104: They said to Jesus: “Come, today let us pray and fast.” Jesus said: “What sin have I committed, or where have I been defeated?” This too bears the characteristics of a witty responsive *chreia*.⁴⁰⁴ It betrays no “accommodation to gentiles,” but does relativize and challenge the societal norms. The second clause in *Thomas* 53.2 above, which appears to be elaborative, exhibits, in my estimation, an “accommodation” in the reverse: it demonstrates a move away from a critique of fasting and prayer toward an exhortation to pray and fast. The latter clause is responding to the initial responsive *chreia*, not the reverse. This suggests that

⁴⁰² DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 88-94.

⁴⁰³ *Thomas* 14.2 “And whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.” See chapter four for a more thorough discussion of this saying.

⁴⁰⁴ An outline of the *chreia* elaborative methods in antiquity will be offered in chapter three.

the initial clause was *literarily* earlier than the first, at least within *Thomas*. In contrast, DeConick uses *Thomas* 104 as evidence of “a more favorable attitude toward prayer and fasting for the purposes of atonement and self-control”⁴⁰⁵ within the “Kernel gospel.” Again, this overstates the evidence. Jesus in *Thomas* 104 is parodying the practice of prayer and fasting, not advocating for them.

DeConick argues that “[t]he accrual of sayings around Kernel saying 14.4 suggests that the members of the community found that the dietary laws were too difficult to maintain in the course of actively missionizing the Gentiles.”⁴⁰⁶ This conclusion is unsupportable. First, there are no references to being members of any community, nor are there any references to a “mission,” or to “Gentiles.” Second, there are no allusions to the “difficulty” level of “dietary laws” as the motivating factor behind the cluster of sayings in *Thomas* 14. If *Thomas* 14.2⁴⁰⁷ -- “Whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them” -- is the earliest piece within this cluster, then one would have an “accommodation” for the Gentiles from the very beginning, but this is precisely what DeConick is arguing against. What we have here in *Thomas* 14.2 is an imperative to eat “*whatever* is put before you,” not to “accommodate” the Gentiles, there is simply no reference to them. Thus, on a literary basis, DeConick’s argument here is too heavily dependent on an external meta-narrative, rather than the text as we have it.

⁴⁰⁵ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 89.

⁴⁰⁶ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 90. *Thomas* 14 reads as follows: Jesus said to them, “If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves; and if you pray, you will be condemned; and if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits. When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth - it is that which will defile you.” Bold face represents the earlier sayings, whereas italics represents what I consider the elaborations.

⁴⁰⁷ In DeConick’s numbering system this is *Thomas* 14.4.

A similar interpretive move is made regarding *Thomas* 60, which reads:

60.1 <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea.

He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb."

They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat it."

He said to them: "While it is living he will not eat it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (and then he can eat it)."

They said to him: "There is no other way."

60.2 He said to them: "*You also*, seek after a place of repose, lest you become corpses and get consumed."

DeConick's scholarly instinct leads her to speculate that an earlier form of this tradition was once part of the "Kernel gospel." She entertains the possibility that "the older material was probably a parable about a Samaritan taking a lamb to sacrifice at the Temple."⁴⁰⁸ Yet, again, there is no illusion to either the Jerusalem Temple or a rejection of sacrifice. This represents the misplaced application of a particular meta-narrative of Christian beginnings.

DeConick also considers the dismissal of circumcision as evidence of an emerging "anti-Jewish rhetoric."⁴⁰⁹ Though DeConick is right to highlight the parallels in other Christian literature that present similar arguments that *Thomas* 53 does, it is too much to say that such polemic is inherently "anti-Jewish." Judaism in the first and second centuries was not a series of identity markers. One could remain "Jewish" while critiquing the value of Jewish religious practices. Perhaps it is easier to detect, once again, a rather witty response to a question concerning the usefulness of circumcision, rather than an "accommodation" to Gentiles. Imagine the same responsive *chreia* on the mouth of Diogenes of Sinope, and perhaps one can catch the aphoristic wit that may have been espoused. According to DeConick,

⁴⁰⁸ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 90.

⁴⁰⁹ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 90. Cf. *Thomas* 53:

His disciples said to him: "Is circumcision beneficial or not for us?" He said to them: "If it were beneficial their father would beget them circumcised from their mother."

Rather, true circumcision in Spirit is entirely profitable.

because *Thomas* rejects circumcision, it is indicative of the fact that *Thomas* once rigorously held to the practice of circumcision. Yet, by this logic, whatever *Thomas* rejects, *Thomas* once adhered to. There is simply little, if any, evidence of this.

DeConick assumes the same ‘prior-practice’ principle in regards to *Thomas*’ reinterpretation of Sabbath observance in 27: “If you do not fast to the world you will not find the kingdom. If you do not make the Sabbath a (true) Sabbath, you will not see the Father.” She argues that “we can conceive of a scenario in which new Gentile converts tried to convince the community that they should be worshiping on the Lord’s Day rather than on the Sabbath.”⁴¹⁰ However, nothing in *Thomas* 53 necessitates or even suggests such a reading. There is no mention of either the Lord’s Day or Gentiles.

DeConick’s Method in Practice

The application of DeConick’s carefully structured method uncovers, in her estimation, five “speeches of Jesus: which were intended to ‘reperform’ and ‘compose anew’ selections of Jesus’ sayings.”⁴¹¹ The structures of these speeches seem to ‘stick out’ for DeConick after “the later sayings have been removed.”⁴¹² DeConick offers an application of the *chreia* elaborative scheme of Aelius Theon of Alexandria’s *progymnasmata* (which taught students how to construct speeches out of recorded *chreia*/sayings) to what she considers the original sayings in *Thomas*.⁴¹³ There are, however, significant issues with her application of the *progymnasmata* *chreia* elaborative scheme. First, DeConick has jettisoned sayings between

⁴¹⁰ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 91.

⁴¹¹ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 113.

⁴¹² DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 113.

⁴¹³ Cf. Hock, R.F. and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* Vol. I., *The Progymnasmata* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) and Mack, B.L., “Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School.” For a thorough description of this material, see the Appendix.

these speech components that do not evince features of what she terms the ‘accretions.’ DeConick justifies this removal because they evince tendencies that she understands as “accommodation to the Gentile converts” or responses to a “crisis of leadership.” Second, one would need to make sense of the insertion of the characteristic structural “Jesus said” by a later redactor in places that interrupt the flow of these early speeches. In other words, if these speeches were clear in their rhetorical progression, as DeConick argues, it is a wonder that the redactor(s) ‘missed it.’

In order to get a sense of DeConick’s method in practice consider her reconstruction of the first part of the second speech (*Thomas* 17-24):

In this speech the truth about discipleship is revealed to the hearer, truth that Jesus claims has been hidden from now (L. 17: promise). The time is ripe for this revelation since the Kingdom of God has already broken into the world and soon will be fully manifested; like a small mustard seed which has been sown in tilled soil, the Kingdom will quickly mature into ‘a large branch’ (L. 20: rationale). Jesus tells the hearer that his disciples must be ready for the coming of God’s Kingdom and the practical difficulties that are expected to come along with it (L. 21.5: analogy), to understand that the judgment is as near as the sickle which is in hand ready to reap the ripened grain (L. 21.9-10: analogy). The hearers are admonished to listen to Jesus (L. 21.11). Jesus promises that he himself will be the judge, choosing ‘you, one from a thousand, and two from ten thousand’ (L. 23.1: promise). Again, the hearer is told to pay attention to these words (L. 24.2).⁴¹⁴

In my view, as one looks at these sayings without DeConick’s commentary in raw sayings-form, one rarely ‘sees’ the connections DeConick finds so apparent. In fact, there is a plethora of alternative ways that these sayings could be ‘massaged’ into some semblance of rhetorical order. A good majority of the above commentary between the sayings inserts a context that is not actually part of the text *as it is*. What Jesus promises in *Thomas* 17 is not *necessarily* the “Kingdom of God.” *Thomas* 21.5, which concerns the actions a householder would’ve taken

⁴¹⁴ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 118.

had he known that a thief was coming,” is used by DeConick to compare the troubles of the Kingdom of God -- but nothing of the sort is stated. Additionally, there is no justification, apart from chapter seven, for the removal of *Thomas* 21.2-4 from consideration. DeConick here *assumes* that the field referred to in *Thomas* 21.2-4 is that of ‘the world.’ But, it actually follows verbally and thematically after *Thomas* 20, which compares a mustard seed in a field to the Kingdom. It should not be surprising then that the next saying refers to human ‘weeds’ in a field (i.e. tenants/children that have settled in a field that was not their own). That these tenants/children ‘strip naked’ in *Thomas* 21.4, does not require a metaphorical reading. DeConick uses this to leap over *Thomas* 21.2-4, despite its verbal and thematic continuity. Moreover, one must consider why a later redactor inserted (almost arbitrarily) the “Jesus said” formula between these different sayings. DeConick should first delineate the logic behind these insertions before occasionally using their division and occasionally dismissing them. The same should be done regarding the clustering of sayings between the programmatic “Jesus said” formula. If DeConick’s reconstruction of the speeches is to be convincing, then it shouldn’t require as much commentary as she supplies. Without the commentary I fail to see many of the connections she finds so apparent. There are, however, certain connections that are both sensible and require little or no commentary. Take, for example, *Thomas* 25 and 26, each of which concerns the treatment of a ‘brother.’ However, these sayings need not be joined under the rubric that DeConick applies to the “speech,” that is, the “Eschatological Challenges of Discipleship.”⁴¹⁵ There is nothing eschatological in *Thomas* 25 or 26.⁴¹⁶ A more

⁴¹⁵ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 118.

⁴¹⁶ 25. Jesus said: “Love your brother like your soul. Guard him like the pupil of your eye (822).”

26. Jesus said: “You see the sliver in your brother’s eye (822), but you fail to see the plank that is in your own eye. When you remove the plank from your own eye (822) then you will be able to see clearly enough to remove the sliver from your brother’s eye (822).”

‘obvious’ connection is the verbal one. Though, I certainly don’t want to suggest that it is the only or primary connection, only that the verbal and literary connection is undisputed, whereas DeConick’s rubric of eschatological expectation is. The method’s major weakness is twofold: first, the contextualization of the sayings under one extra-textual apocalyptic rubric diminishes the more concrete literary, formal, and thematic connections between the sayings; second, the ‘filling in’ between the sayings with commentary is more often than not the result of a relatively arbitrary scholarly decision.

Beyond this specific critique of DeConick’s method, there exist a series of formal considerations. It is not surprising that DeConick spends little time considering the formal parallels and discontinuities in *Thomas*, as these would probably be considered part of the literary analytical method from which she labors to separate her method. Yet, there is much more happening on the formal and literary level than DeConick admits. There is a significant difference between an aphorism and an apocalyptic declaration, as there is between anachronistic ‘I-speech’ and proverbial wisdom. These formal considerations cannot be ignored -- nor are they merely literary considerations. They are, rather, representative of ‘forms of speech’ which are not socially isolated but characteristic of certain dispositions toward the wider social world. The aphoristic usually, though not always, reflects a wisdom-oriented challenge to broadly accepted customs; and the proverbial sage-like summation of received wisdom.⁴¹⁷ Both the aphoristic and proverbial, however, are rarely, if ever, associated with what DeConick describes as the “Prophet-Orator” in “conservative Christian Judaism.”⁴¹⁸ That there is not one “thus saith the Lord” in *Thomas* is quite telling.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Crossan, J.D., *In Fragments*, especially chapter one.

⁴¹⁸ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 122-123.

Furthermore, the parallels DeConick uses as evidence of this particular type of prophetic-orator speech is primarily the later Pseudo-Clementine corpus and the writings associated with the Ebionites. The problem with this evidence is that it relies on extra-textual material and not inter-textual evidence. The former should be introduced only after a careful textual analysis from the text itself has been performed. Jesus speaks in the oracular in only a few places (*Thomas* 10, 11, and 16). Moreover, there is little evidence of the “prophet” (in a traditional Hebrew Scriptural sense) existing in first century Palestine, whereas there exists substantial evidence for the activity of sages associated with aphoristic and proverbial speech.⁴¹⁹

DeConick also distinguishes her project from the redaction-critical tradition by asserting that the accretion process took place within “the oral registry,” and that “the traditions were not *mainly* developed by a redactor with a pen in hand. Rather, the oral *and* written traditions they collected were gathered and adapted *mainly* in the process of the oral reperformance and recreation of the words of Jesus over the entire life of the community...”⁴²⁰ However, this critique of redaction-critical theorists is rather unfair. Redaction-critical analysts do not assume that traditions were “*mainly* developed by a redactor with a pen in hand.” The reason for working from the redaction-critical perspective is precisely *because* we have the pen, but not the ‘original’ voice. The redaction-critical scholar believes that searching after an ‘original’ or more authentic voice is simply beyond our historical abilities. I do not know of any redaction-critical scholars that picture the redactor as

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Mack, B.L., *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), especially 1-69. See also Taussig, H., “Jesus in the Company of Sages,” in R.W. Hoover, ed., *Profiles of Jesus* (Polebridge, 2002), 169-193.

⁴²⁰ DeConick, A.D., *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, 64.

a sole 'pen-and-paper' actor. In every case I am aware of, the community creates or adapts new material, and the redactor operates *with the community's approval*. If she or he did not, then the text would be rejected. DeConick's distinction here is not very helpful, besides the important reminder that orality, performance, and community stand behind texts (especially redacted ones). While DeConick's work represents the most precise and thorough analysis of the possible strata operating in *Thomas*, it will require further demonstration if it is to prove persuasive in the long run.

J.M. Asgeirsson: The Chreia Elaborative Doublet Stratum Proposal

J.M. Asgeirsson's 1998 Claremont Graduate University dissertation, "Doublets and Strata: Towards a Rhetorical Approach to the Gospel of Thomas," proposes that the later doublet traditions (i.e. those sayings that appear to be near verbatim 'pairs') that exist towards the end of the Gospel have been inserted by a later redactor according to the techniques outlined in a series of Greco-Roman rhetorical manuals referred to today as the '*Progymnasmata*.' After identifying the doublets⁴²¹ in the *Gospel of Thomas*, Asgeirsson outlines how these doublets constitute a secondary stratum within the text. This secondary stratum, according to Asgeirsson, runs from *Thomas* 99 to 112.

An example of this chreia elaborative runs as follows:

I) Logion 99: Introductory Syllogism:

1) Major Premise ("Your brothers and your mother are standing outside")

⁴²¹Logia 21b and 103

Logia 22c and 106

Logia 55 and 101

Logia 56 and 80

Logia 87 and 112

(Asgeirsson, J.M., *Doublets and Strata*, 161).

- 2) Minor Premise (“Those here who do the will of my father are my brothers and my mother”)
 - 3) Conclusion: (“It is they who will enter the kingdom of my father”)
- Logion 100: Analogy:
- 4) To the major premise: (Caesar’s men demand taxes from us”)
 - 5) To the minor premise: (“Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs God”)
 - 6) To the conclusion: (“And give me what is mine”)
- Logion 101: Judgement:
- 7) Example (“Whoever does [not] hate his [father] and mother as I do cannot become a [disciple to] me”)
 - 8) Opposite: (“And whoever does [not] love his [father and] his mother as I do cannot become a [disciple to] me”)
 - 9) Rationale (“For my mother [...] but [my] true [mother] gave me life”)⁴²²

This work demonstrates quite definitely that there is, at least at times, a rhetorical progression operating within the *Gospel of Thomas*. However, Asgeirsson’s insights, I think, can be expanded toward the rest of the *Gospel of Thomas* text. In the Appendix to this dissertation I offer a proposal that applies Asgeirsson’s initial insights to the entire text. The above outline of the argument running between *Thomas* 99-101, though persuasive, can be broadened in complexity by entertaining the possibility of different strata also operating within the cluster of sayings. In this sense, pieces of Asgeirsson’s reconstruction of the argument running between *Thomas* 99 and 112 may have been sequenced differently in earlier renditions of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Just as Logion 101 above retains ‘interior elaboration’ in numbers 7-9, it is also possible that number 9 was a later redaction which was not originally part of the complex.

In regard to the thesis that the section between *Thomas* 99 and 112 exists as a ‘secondary stratum’ two points of clarification remain: 1) why not include *Thomas* 113 and 114 in this final part of the *Gospel of Thomas*? and 2) what if this were not necessarily a ‘doublet stratum’ but an intentional chiasmic structure? This second question does not in any way

⁴²² Asgeirsson, J.M., *Doublets and Strata*, 195.

diminish Asgeirsson's work -- it only wonders whether the parallel structure at the beginning and the end of the text (i.e. *Thomas* 3 and 113⁴²³) may not be a principle running through this 'doublet stratum.' Whatever the case, Asgeirsson's work has succeeded in exhibiting that *Thomas* is both a stratified document and (at times) a rhetorically structured document. In response to this material outlined above, I have offered in the Appendix to this dissertation my own tentative stratification proposal for *Gospel of Thomas*, and I refer the reader there.

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<i>Thomas</i> 3.1 & 5.1	<i>Thomas</i> 113
"If those who lead you proclaim to you: 'The Kingdom is in heaven,' then the birds of heaven will enter before you. If they proclaim to you: 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will enter before you."	His disciples said to Jesus: "When will the kingdom come?" "It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying, 'Here it is!' or 'Look! There it is.'"
Recognize what is right in front of your face, and what is hidden will be revealed to you.	Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but people don't see it.

Chapter Three

Back to the Beginning

In the preceding chapter I outlined a number of the stratification proposals for the *Gospel of Thomas* and in the Appendix to this dissertation (which is presumed to have been read throughout this chapter) I outlined what I believe are the components of what I term the ‘major redaction’ and showed how their sequencing within the earlier version(s) of *Thomas* had both a ‘reason and rhyme.’ This chapter, along with the Appendix, represents my own approach to the stratification of the *Gospel of Thomas*. By the ‘major redaction’ I mean a coherent thematic grouping of sayings material that was *inserted* into a preexistent sayings tradition. The insertion of this redactional sayings material, as demonstrated in the Appendix, was accomplished in two ways: 1) as entirely new sayings, and 2) as thematic *elaborations* of preexisting sayings material in a manner that reflects the hermeneutical interests of the major redactor. In this chapter I intend to show how the major redaction coheres thematically and relates to early Syrian Christian thought. This chapter establishes two of the three pieces of my methodology for recovering the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. After having first recovered the major redaction according to rhetorical and literary analysis in the Appendix, what remains to be shown is that what I have designated as the major redactional material coheres both thematically and historically as a whole. A literary analysis (as exhibited in the Appendix) only brings us so far -- it serves only to isolate the major redactional material, but fails to offer a coherent picture of the major redactor(s). (For a full listing of the sayings traditions within *Thomas* that I designate as part of the major redaction, see the Appendix).

The thematic component of this analysis establishes that the major redactional material represents a distinctive stratum within the text. However, because other scholars have attempted to contextualize *Thomas* according to a particular theme or hermeneutic⁴²⁴ (e.g. Jewish-Christian, 'gnostic,' apocalyptic, etc.), I think it is important to add another component as a measure of control on the thematic contextual enterprise -- that is, the 'historical' criterion. What I mean by the 'historical criterion' is that the later texts associated with *Thomas* should both parallel and agree with what I have delineated as the major redaction. If, for example, the next text in the Thomasine trajectory (i.e. the *Book of Thomas*) was expressly interested in *Thomas* 113 (which I have placed in the initial chreia collection core) rather than major redactional material, such as *Thomas* 114, then there would be a good chance that I had made a mistake in my recovery of the major redaction. I think, rather, that the next texts in the Thomasine trajectory and in Syria in general should share the hermeneutical interests of the final stratum. Thus the major redactional material I recovered in the Appendix should be in (relative) thematic agreement with the broader Syrian world and the later Thomasine trajectory specifically. Fortunately, the *Gospel of Thomas* provides historians a rare perspective on the development of one school of thought (i.e. *Gospel of Thomas*, *Book of Thomas*, *Acts of Thomas*, *Psalms of Thomas*), which provides us the necessary material required to judge whether these later texts share the perspective of the major redactional material or earlier material. If we find that the later texts are *not* interested in the themes of the major redactional material, while being keenly aware and interested in material from earlier strata, then it seems right to assume that my literary and thematic analysis was incorrect. It is for this reason that the third element of my methodology (the historical

⁴²⁴ See chapter two.

criterion) is required. However, it is important to note that ‘shared interest’ is different from mere ‘literary parallel.’⁴²⁵ The *Dialogue of the Savior*, for example, may have parallels from earlier strata in *Thomas*, but this is probably accidental, as the hermeneutical interests are more aligned with the major redaction than with the interests of the initial chreia collection (or any other stratum) outlined in the Appendix. I am looking for *shared hermeneutical interest*, not just literary parallels. In sum: the literary component explored in the Appendix uncovers shifts within the extant text, the thematic component establishes that the material recovered from the literary analysis coheres thematically, and the historical component establishes that this material shares the hermeneutics of the next editions within the Thomasine trajectory and Syria more broadly. The latter two components mark the task before us.

Looking Toward the Beginning

The major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* is primarily an answer to the problem that Genesis 1-3 presents humanity. It teaches that “the place where the beginning is, there the end *will* be.”⁴²⁶ Thus, the way forward is backward: one must reenter the first Creation in Genesis 1. Indeed, for the major redactor of *Thomas*, the Kingdom *is* the Beginning. What humanity inherited after Genesis 1 and in the experience in Eden, according to *Thomas*, was death, but it is this ‘taste of death’ that the major redaction intends to teach us how to conquer. This intention is made clear in the first saying: “Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings *will not taste death*.” This saying frames the entire Gospel and thus provides an answer to *Thomas* 85:

⁴²⁵ A literary parallel would be something like St. Ephrem’s *Commentary on the Diatesseron* 14.24: ‘And as Christ has taken care of his flock in all necessities, so he has consoled it in the sadness of solitude when he said, “where one is, there am I,” lest all who are in solitude be sad. For he himself is our joy and he is with us. And “where two are I am,” because his grace overshadows us. And “when we are three,” as we come together in the church, this is the perfected body, the image of Christ.’ Here Ephrem appears to be aware of the *Thomas* tradition (i.e. “Where one is, there I am -- *Thomas* 30), but he doesn’t necessarily evince interest in the *Gospel of Thomas*’ hermeneutic, which will be explored in this chapter.

⁴²⁶ *Thomas* 18.1b.

Jesus said: "Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth. But he was not worthy of you. For, if he had been worthy (of you) [*he would*] not [*have tasted*] death." The sayings, according to the major redactor, hold the key to unlocking the gate of Eden. It proposes that it is time that humanity goes back, for our *penance*⁴²⁷ outside the initial creation in Genesis 1 is complete.

This proposal is not new. S. Davies in 1992 in his groundbreaking article, "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*" proposed that:

Jesus, as Thomas portrays him, insists that the world ought to be considered to be in the condition of Gen 1:1-2:4 and, accordingly, that people should restore themselves to the condition of the image of God. They will then live in this world with the rest and immortality proper to the seventh day of creation. Jesus is to be understood accordingly; one who seeks Jesus will find him when the hidden primordial state of the world is found. However, Jesus is not himself an essential element in salvation, and so, in Thomas, Christology per se is actively discouraged.⁴²⁸

E. Pagels also details the relationship between *Thomas* and Genesis 1 in her article, "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John."⁴²⁹ However, where Davies discusses the similarities between *John* and *Thomas*, Pagels sets out to detail the differences between the two interpretive traditions: "In order to relate what happened 'in the beginning' to bring about the present human condition, each Gospel author invokes and interprets Genesis 1--John in his remarkable prologue (which may, of course, predate the Gospel itself), and Thomas in a cluster of sayings that occur throughout his Gospel.

⁴²⁷ For the debate whether Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden as penance or punishment see Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), chapter seven.

⁴²⁸ Davies, S., "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (1992), 663-682; 664.

⁴²⁹ Pagels, E., "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 118, No. 3 (1999), 477-496.

According to Davies, "*Thomas* seems to derive from the same milieu as does Philo -- Hellenistic Judaism, which produced its vocabulary largely through allegorical exegesis, especially of Genesis 1 and 2. It is the essence of allegorical exegesis to conclude that term A is the equivalent of term B and of term C. Thus a text containing terms B and C may be understood to discuss A even though A is not mentioned."⁴³⁰ Davies proposes that *Thomas* follows this equation between terms in regard to the 'beginning,' the 'image of God,' the 'kingdom,' and 'light.'⁴³¹ For Davies, *Thomas* 17-19 are the quintessential sayings that mark much of *Thomas* as a text interested in reinterpreting Genesis 1-2. This context for *Thomas* applies throughout the tradition:

The image of God (Gen 1:27) exists at the seventh day (Gos. Thom. 4) having been given dominion to rule (Gos. Thom. 2; Gen 1:26) over all creatures, in a state of rest (Gos. Thom. 2 [POxy.654], 51, 60; Gen 2:2-3). Death occurs to Adam, not to the image of God (Gos. Thom. 85; Gen 3:19). The compiler of the Gospel of Thomas understands the first chapters of Genesis in their plain sense, that there are two creations of primordial humanity: the image of God brought forth in Gen 1:1-2:4, Adam created in Gen 2:5-3:24. For the first, the image of God, there is neither law nor sin, nothing that would require prayer or fasting or giving of alms (Gos. Thom. 14, 104). The image of God has dominion over the perfect kingdom of God, living through the light of creation (Gen 1:3-4) in a condition of rest and immortality.⁴³²

According to Davies, the *Gospel of Thomas* exhorts readers to conceive of the world through the perspective of the primordial light, which was created on the first day. However, the problem that precipitated the *Gospel of Thomas* was the fact that people were not living with this perspective in line. Rather, they were following what Davies terms an "ordinary

⁴³⁰ Davies, "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," 665-666.

⁴³¹ Davies, "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," 666.

⁴³² Davies, "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," 668.

perspective."⁴³³ For Davies, the primordial light created on the first day persists throughout the world and remains accessible in the present. He also asserts that the mission of Jesus was not to be a 'revealer' but to *reveal* the path back to this primordial existence in Genesis 1 -- in this sense, Jesus' message is more important than his status as the 'messenger.' This light, according to Davies, can be "actualized" by the seeker of Wisdom, and will, then, return the initiate to the first creation. He argues that "Such people are in their primordial unisexual state of immortal rest and dominion, images of God prior to religious requisites."⁴³⁴

E. Pagels on Thomas' Exegesis of Genesis 1

According to Pagels, *Thomas'* contribution to first (and second) century interpretations of the Genesis 1 narrative was not necessarily "original or unique."⁴³⁵ She notes that "Thomas's Genesis exegesis" in comparison to the broader cosmological theories in the first century "goes much farther, back to the time before creation."⁴³⁶ Pagels summarizes the interpretive framework for much of *Thomas* as follows: "Thomas takes Gen 1:3 to mean that when the primordial light appeared on the 'first day,' prior to the world's creation, there appeared in that light the form of a primordial *antropōs* -- whom log.77 implicitly identifies with Jesus-through whom all things are to come into being."⁴³⁷

Pagels proposes that the Genesis 1 speculative material in *Thomas* makes most sense within the context of ritual baptism.⁴³⁸ She sees evidence of such in *Thomas* 37 where Jesus

⁴³³ Davies, "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," 668.

⁴³⁴ Davies, "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," 679.

⁴³⁵ Pagels, E., "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," 479.

⁴³⁶ Pagels, E., "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," 479.

⁴³⁷ Pagels, E., "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," 479-480.

⁴³⁸ Pagels, E., "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," 489.

instructs his disciples to strip off their garments and tread on them as little children. Baptism was, according to Pagels, the pathway back to Eden and to the first image of God. Though this protological speculation has parallels with the Johannine prologue, she notes that the two traditions begin from different “moments”⁴³⁹ in the creation story:

Thomas privileges the appearance of the primordial light (Gen 1:3) as “Act 1” of the drama, and moves quickly to “Act 2,” the creation of humankind in its image (Gen 1:26). “Act 1,” then, shows how the divine manifests itself in the beginning; “Act 2” shows how it actually manifests itself to humankind. John’s author, too, apparently has Gen 1:3 in mind as he describes what he takes to be “Act 1” -- the divine logos effecting all creation (John 1:3-5). But according to John, “Act 2” occurs only long ages after creation -- when the logos becomes incarnate (1:14). Here John differs not only from Thomas, but from all other exegesis that derives from mainstream Jewish Genesis speculation, evinced in sources ranging from Philo and Poimandres to the *Odes of Solomon* or *The Writing without Title*⁴⁴⁰...

For John, then, “Act 1” includes the whole revelation of the logos from creation of the primordial light, the universe, and humankind, through the Torah to the time to John the Baptist--all these only setting the stage, so to speak, for the culmination of the divine drama. As we noted, John envisions “Act 2” -- the successful revelation of the divine -- as occurring only when the logos, previously manifest as light (1:3-4), finally appears in the world in human form. For John insists that whenever the light previously had appeared -- in three scenes preceding “Act 2” -- it met with stunning failure. First, John declares, the light encountered opposition and incomprehension (1:5); second, lack of recognition (1:10); and finally outright rejection (1:11).⁴⁴¹

Pagels argues that the author of the *Gospel of John* is responding to a “basic pattern of Genesis exegesis adopted as well by such followers of Jesus as Thomas’s author.”⁴⁴² The major difference for Pagels between *John’s* and *Thomas’* interpretation of Genesis 1, then, is the difference between the image of God being either Jesus alone or all of humanity. While this study certainly highlights differences, I wonder whether these apparent differences were

⁴³⁹ Pagels, E., “Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John,” 488.

⁴⁴⁰ E. Pagels lists these parallels in the Appendix to her article.

⁴⁴¹ Pagels, E., “Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John,” 488-489.

⁴⁴² Pagels, E., “Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John,” 491.

intentional. I, on the other hand, understand *Thomas* and *John* working from a similar referential matrix (i.e. Genesis 1), but fail to see conscious disagreement between the two communities. Both *Thomas* and *John* reside in the tension between Jesus' exclusivity and his accessibility:

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Gospel of John</i>
13.1. I am not your teacher – you are drunk. Because you drank from the bubbling spring that I have measured out.	4:14. But those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.
108. Jesus said: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person."	7:37-38. Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'
24.3 There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire world. 24.4 If that one does not shine, there is darkness.	11:9a-10. Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.
77.1. I am the light which is above them all, I am (the) all. (The) all has come forth from me, and (the) all has split open before me.	8:12. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.
50.1 Jesus said: "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' Say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image.' 50.2 If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living Father.' 50.3 If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say, 'It is movement and repose.'"	8:14b. ...because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. 1.9. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

In each of the above instances there is a participatory dimension. Jesus does offer the path, the Wisdom, but it is the reader that must enact it. In both traditions, Jesus' words are likened

to water that provides the means to overcome death. In *Thomas*, however, this water also carries intoxicating powers; in this sense, the sayings of Jesus have the ability to overwhelm the listener. In both traditions, though, Jesus is the one who gives the Wisdom -- it is not a matter of personal illumination alone. One must become *like* Jesus in *Thomas*, whereas in *John* one must become one *with* Jesus (and the Father):

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (*John* 17:19-23)

While *John* expresses Jesus' exclusivity as a person more than *Thomas*, both traditions do share notions of this exclusivity. In *Thomas* the reader can become this same light that Jesus is in *Thomas* 77.1 -- and yet, *John* too opens a way for the readers as 'children' to become related to this primordial light. *Thomas* opens this path most explicitly in *Thomas* 3 and 24; but in both cases it is Jesus that disperses this wisdom. So, while *Thomas* and *John* emphasize the tension between Jesus' exclusivity and his accessibility -- his status as a messenger and his message -- differently, both traditions share the same tension. Both *John* and *Thomas* depict Jesus as the messenger to the world; consider the *Thomas* version in saying 28:

Jesus said: "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and I was manifested to them in flesh. I found all of them drunk and none of them thirsting. And my soul throbbed for the sons of men for they are blind in their hearts and do not see. For blind they came into the world empty and seek also to leave the world empty. But right now they are merely drunk. When they sober up, then they will turn."

Perhaps we have made too much of the perceived conflicts between these two communities. Is it not possible that both traditions sit along a very similar, if not the same, trajectory? I believe

the subsequent Christological debates in the fourth century, most prominently in the Council of Nicaea, have infiltrated the modern study of the possible relationship between the Johannine and Thomasine communities. In the above comparisons I cannot help but see difference in emphasis rather than substance. Jesus is divine in both, and in both traditions the 'children' of God participate in both Jesus and God/Father (Cf. *Thomas* 108, *John* 17:19-23). I will now turn to a further investigation of these initial insights offered by Pagels and Davies, but in the specific context of the material designated as the major redaction in the Appendix.

The Kingdom in the Beginning: The Major Redaction

The major redactional material of the *Gospel of Thomas* acts as both a commentary upon, and an answer to, the Creation and Eden stories in Genesis 1-3. What follows is a walk through Genesis 1-2 with the aid of the major redactional sayings and the broader Syrian interest in these traditions, as well as the Thomasine trajectory more specifically. I am not interested in offering a novel interpretation of this story but, rather, in supporting my proposal that *Genesis 1-5 is the primary context of the major redaction of the Gospel of Thomas*. Within the context of early Syria this would not be out of the ordinary. Indeed, for early Syrian Christianity, the Kingdom *is* Eden. This is presented most persuasively and eloquently in a

Syriac Hymn, which S. Brock has titled *The Dispute between the Cherub and the Thief*,⁴⁴³ of which

I will quote portions at length:

3. "Remember me, Lord", was what he cried out on the cross,
"in that Kingdom which does not pass away, [Luke 23:43]
and in that glory in which You will be revealed
may I behold Your rest, seeing that I have acknowledged You". [cp Luke 12:8]

4. Our Lord replied, "Since you have acknowledged me
this very day you shall be in the Garden of Eden;
in very truth, man, you will not be kept back
from that Kingdom to which you are looking.

5. "Take with you the cross as a sign, and be off:
it is a great key whereby the mighty gate
of that Garden shall be opened,
and Adam, who has been expelled, shall enter again". [Gen. 3:24]

6. The word of our Lord was sealed
like a royal missive from the palace;
it was handed over to the thief
who took it and made off for the Garden of Eden.

7. The Cherub heard him and rushed up,
he grabbed the Thief at the gate,
stopping him with the sharp blade that he held.
All astonished, he addressed him as follows:

8. CHERUB "Tell me, my man, who has sent you?
What is it you want, and how did you get here?
What is the reason that brought you here?
Reveal and explain to me who it is who has sent you".

9. THIEF "I will tell you who has sent me,
just hold back your blade and listen to my words.
I am a thief, but I supplicated for mercy,
and it was your Lord who sent me on my way here".

⁴⁴³ Brock, S.P., "The Dispute between the Cherub and the Thief," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2002. See also these related works by S.P. Brock: Brock, S.P. "The Dispute Poem: from Sumer to Syriac", *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 1 (2001), 1-10; *The Harp of the Spirit: Eighteen Poems of Saint Ephrem* (Studies Supplementary to Sobornost, 4; 1983), 70-72; *Sogiattha: Syriac Dialogue Hymns* (Syrian Churches Series XI; Kottayam, 1987), 28-35; *Sughyotho Mgabyotho*, (Monastery of St Ephrem, Holland, 1982), pp. 61-5; "Syriac dispute poems: the various types", in Reinink and Vanstiphout, *Dispute Poems and Dialogues*, 109-19 (reprinted in *From Ephrem to Romanos* (Aldershot, 1999), chap. VII (and Addenda, 4-5); "Syriac dialogue poems: marginalia to a recent edition", *Le Muséon* 97 (1984), 29-58.

10. CHERUB "By what powerful means did your arrival take place?
Who brought you to this dread spot?
Who transported you across the sea of fire
so that you could enter Eden? Who is it who sent you?"

11. THIEF "It was through the power of the Son, who sent me,
that I crossed over and came here without hindrance.
Through Him I subdued all powers
and I have come to enter here, seeing that He has given me confidence".

12. CHERUB "You are indeed a thief, just as you have said,
but you can't steal into this region of ours:
it is fenced in with the sword that guards it. [Gen. 3:24]
Turn back, my man, you have lost your way".

13. THIEF "I was indeed a thief, but I have changed:
it was not to steal that I have come here.
Look, I've got with me the key to Eden,
to open it up and enter: I will not be prevented".

14. CHERUB "Our region is awesome and cannot be trodden,
for fire is its indomitable wall;
the blade flashes out all around it.
How is it you have made so bold as to come here?"

15. THIEF "Your region is indeed awesome, just as you have said,
- but only until our Lord mounted the cross,
when He transfixed the sword of all suffering
so that your blade no longer kills".

16. CHERUB "Ever since the time that Adam left
I haven't ever seen anyone turn up here;
your race has been banished from the Garden;
you shall not enter it, so don't argue any more".

17. THIEF "Ever since the time that Adam left
your Lord has been angered at our race,
but now He is reconciled and has opened up the gate. [Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:16]
It is to no purpose that you are standing here".

The major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*, like Jesus on the Cross, also offers a key to the Garden of Eden. It offers a "*path leading back to the Garden*":

26. CHERUB "It is something totally novel that I've seen today:

a path leading back into the Garden.

But here are Adam's footprints, take a look:
he has left here and not returned again".

27. THIEF "Jesus your Lord has performed a novel deed,
for now He has released Adam who had been confined;
He has raised up whole crowds from inside Sheol, [Matt. 27:52]
and they have sent me in advance, to open up for them".

Jesus, in the major redaction of *Thomas*, is a guide more than anything else. He shows the way to return to the Genesis 1 condition but he does not proclaim himself as the unique inheritor of this condition. Yet, before describing the path to Genesis 1 presented in the *Gospel of Thomas*, let us first walk through Genesis 1 with *Thomas*.

A Walk Through the Beginning with Thomas

Genesis 1:24-28: And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our *image*, according to our *likeness*; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind *in his image*, in the *image of God* he created them; *male and female he created them*. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

The book of Genesis preserves not one but at least two creation stories: Genesis 1:1-2:4a and 2:4-3:24. The major redactor is interested in returning to the 'first creation' by overcoming the 'second creation.' In this initial creation the image of God was "male *and* female" -- and this is emphasized in the Genesis 1 narrative. In this initial creation God has already breached his own command against making 'images' (of worship). The popular extra-canonical story of *The Life of Adam and Eve* plays upon this prohibition of 'worshipping

images'⁴⁴⁴ and offers a rationale for the Serpent's tempting of Adam and Eve. The Serpent (or Devil) in *The Life of Adam and Eve* tells Adam that he did not consider it right to *worship* he who had *come after him*.⁴⁴⁵ It was because of this rebellion that Satan was cast out of the celestial realms and forced to roam the earth. In this context, the serpent's tempting of Adam and Eve makes sense: because Satan (who in later tradition is associated with the serpent) knew that he could not prevail over the Lord in heaven, he sought to deface the image of God that had claimed Satan's former glory.⁴⁴⁶ In this way Satan hoped that the newly created image of God would be so disturbing that God would 'regret having created it' (which happens before the

⁴⁴⁴ *The Life of Adam and Eve* (Latin Version) 12.1-16.3:

Groaning, the Devil said: "O Adam, all my enmity, jealousy, and resentment is towards you, since on account of you I was expelled and alienated from my glory, which I had in heaven in the midst of the angels. On account of you I was cast out upon the earth." Adam answered: "What have I done to you? What fault do I have against you? Since you have not been harmed nor injured by us, why do you persecute us?" The Devil answered: "Adam what are you saying to me? On account of you I was cast out from heaven. When you were formed, I was cast out from the face of God and was sent forth from the company of the angels. When God blew into you the breath of life and your countenance and likeness were made in the image of God, Michael led you and made you worship in the sight of God. The Lord God then said: 'Behold, Adam, I have made you in our image and likeness.' Having gone forth Michael called all the angels saying: '*Worship the image of the Lord God*, just as the Lord God has commanded.' Michael himself worshipped first then he called me and said: 'Worship the image of God Jehovah.' I answered: 'I do not have it within me to worship Adam.' When Michael compelled me to worship, I said to him: 'Why do you compel me? I will not worship him who is lower and posterior to me. I am prior to that creature. Before he was made, I had already been made. He ought to worship me.' Hearing this, other angels who were under me were unwilling to worship him. Michael said: 'Worship the image of God. If you do not worship, the Lord God will grow angry with you.' I said: 'If he grows angry with me, I will place my seat above the stars of heaven and I will be like the Most High.' Then the Lord God grew angry with me and sent me forth with my angels from our glory. On account of you we were expelled from our dwelling into this world and cast out upon the earth. Immediately we were in grief, since we had been despoiled of so much glory, and we grieved to see you in such a great happiness of delights. By a trick I cheated your wife and caused you to be expelled through her from the delights of your happiness, just as I had been expelled from my glory." (English translation by B. Custis.)

⁴⁴⁵ "I [Satan] said, 'Go away, Michael! I shall not bow down to him who was born after me, for I am former. Why is it proper for me to bow down to him?'" (*The Life of Adam and Eve*, G. Anderson's translation).

⁴⁴⁶ G. Anderson makes a similar point, writing: "The serpent did not simply tempt for the thrill of it; *something was at stake*. Someone must have envied the stature of Adam and Eve as the image of God. It was not logical to assume that a mere snake could have been the primary culprit. Most likely, the fallen angel Satan had put him up to it." Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 21.

flood in Genesis 6, for example). After this potential regret by God, so the story suggests, Satan believed he would be re-elevated to his former glory.

In the major redaction this *first image of God*, which was both male *and* female, is an 'image' that still exists within the human person. Consider *Thomas* 84:

84. Jesus said: "In the days when you would look at your resemblance you rejoiced. When, however, you look at the images that came into being upon your emergence, which neither die nor manifest themselves, how much you will have to bear!"⁴⁴⁷

The major redaction suggests that there is a sort of terror involved in rediscovering the first image that God created in Genesis 1:26-27. This is echoed in *Thomas* 70:

70. Jesus said: "When you birth the one within you, that one will save you. If you do not have that one within you, that one will kill you."⁴⁴⁸

In *Thomas* 84 we are told that the first image will never die, likewise in *Thomas* 70 we learn that the "one within you" (which is probably the first image described in *Thomas* 84) will also save you (presumably from death). Yet this "one within" which I consider the first image of

⁴⁴⁷ According to A. DeConick, "this saying references Genesis 1.26-28 where the human being is said to have been made in God's image, a discussion common to first-century Jewish and Christian texts. This was interpreted by some to be a divine image of the person, not the human body. The discussion focused on Adam's fall which resulted in a loss of or separation from this eternal heavenly eternal self." (A.D. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 249). This notion of a 'heavenly twin' recalls the 'twin-ship' doctrine within Manichaeism, which I discussed in chapter one. It was believed that every person on earth had a 'double' in the ethereal world's above, as did Mani and Jesus. This double was the preexistent mirror 'image' of the self trapped in matter. In comparison to the 'bodily image,' however, this other primordial celestial image was terrifying. This heavenly double was and is the true self, but the problem for the Manichaean is that he or she is trapped in matter. This is paralleled in the Manichaean Psalm Book, 1.14-17:

'He established chambers of life;

He set up living images in them;

He set up living images in them that never perish."

(Cited in A. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 249). This Manichaean parallel attests to the Syrian orientation of this major redactional material.

⁴⁴⁸ According to A. DeConick, "This saying speaks to the early Christian belief that the soul alone cannot achieve immortality for itself. Rather, the Christian must possess the Holy Spirit (here indicated by the demonstrative ΠΗ), the 'great wealth' within ([*Thomas*] 29) which aids the soul in its process of transformation." (A.D. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 225). While this is certainly possible, I don't see a reason to introduce the Holy Spirit here. In my estimation the context set by the Edenic sayings provides a better referential horizon. This will be explored more fully below.

God (i.e. the human person) is also terrifying. This image shows, in a most uncomfortable way, the difference between the first image and the emergent 'animal way of life' associated with the second image. This difference is echoed in the Syrian *Gospel of Philip*:

Philip 71: There are two trees growing in Paradise. The one bears animals, the other bears men. Adam ate from the tree which bore animals. He became an animal and he brought forth animals. For this reason the children of Adam worship animals. The tree [...] fruit is [...] increased. [...] ate the [...] fruit of the [...] bears men, [...] man. [...] God created man. [...] men create God. That is the way it is in the world - men make gods and worship their creation. It would be fitting for the gods to worship men!⁴⁴⁹

It seems that *Thomas* 58 also appeals to this discovery of the image "that came into being upon your emergence":

58. Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who is disturbed (by his discovery), he has found life."

This initial image of God created in Genesis 1:26-28 "will never die" according to *Thomas* 84, and here in *Thomas* 58 we find a discovery that leads to life. Because the first image does not die I am persuaded that *Thomas* 58 also refers to this first image -- though this discovery was 'disturbing,' it led to life. This sentiment is also echoed in the elaboration in *Thomas* 2.2:

2.1 Jesus said: "Let the one who seeks continue seeking until he finds."

⁴⁴⁹ All quotations of the *Gospel of Philip* are from W. Isenberg's translation. (J.M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, revised edition. (HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1990).

*2.2 And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed, and he will rule-as-a-king over (the) all [and after ruling, he will rest].*⁴⁵⁰

According to the major redactor, what one searches after is the first image that is within⁴⁵¹ the human person. However, this first image carries a most coveted authority to rule. As G. Anderson put it, "To be made in the image of God is to be enthroned *over the angels*."⁴⁵² It seems that the 'All' (i.e. everything) may include the angelic hierarchy. The quotation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:6-8 makes this elevation over the angelic hierarchy explicit: "You made him for a little while just lower than the angels, *but then you crowned him with glory and honor, subjecting all things under his feet*." Perhaps we could translate the latter clause according to *Thomas* 2.2 as follows: 'subjecting (the) All under his feet,' i.e. ruling over the All. This ruling over the All echoes the saying in *Thomas* 77.1:

77.1 Jesus said: "I am the light which is above them all, I am (the) all. (The) all has come forth from me, and (the) all has split open before me."

Adam was meant to rule over all (including the angels); but, like Jesus in *Thomas* 77, the reader renounces this power in humility:

⁴⁵⁰ The formative stratum, marked by the bold-faced font, parallels the search for Sophia (Wisdom) in *Ben Sirach* 6:24-29:

Give ear, my child, and take wise counsel, and do not ignore my advice.

Put your feet into her fetters, and your neck into her chains:

Bow down your shoulder, and bear her, and do not be grieved with her shackles.

Come to her with all your mind, and keep her ways with all your effort.

Search for her, and she shall be made known to you, and when you have found her, let her not go:

For in the end you shall *find rest in her*, and she shall be turned into your joy.

(Author's translation).

S. Davies and M. Meyer also connect this tradition to the search for Wisdom in Greco-Roman antiquity (cf. S. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 37-39; M. Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 167-169. A. DeConick proposes that the accretive clause "may be a reference to the old idea from Jerusalem that the flesh had to be ruled by the will of God, rather than the passions and desires of the body (James 1.14-15, 27; 3.23; 4.1; 1 Peter 1.4-6; 2.10)." (A. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 49). See the Appendix for a more detailed discussion.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. *Thomas* 70.

⁴⁵² Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 26. Emphasis mine.

81. Jesus said: "Whoever has grown rich should rule. But whoever has power should renounce."⁴⁵³

110. Jesus said: "Whoever has found the world and become rich should renounce the world."⁴⁵⁴

As G. Anderson put it, "*This power [to rule] is dependent on a prior act of humiliation.*"⁴⁵⁵ Jesus is the 'first to reclaim the Genesis 1 condition,' but the reader must follow his lead in the major redaction. According to Anderson, "In order to get the picture right, one must define the first Adam in terms of the ideal character of the second."⁴⁵⁶ This is why the elaborative move in the Greek form of *Thomas* 2.2 ends with the phrase "and after ruling, he will rest." Anderson notes that:

If Adam emerges with too much glory and honor, the character of the second Adam will be seriously compromised. On the other hand, theologians have always claimed that the categories of Christology and anthropology are deeply interwoven. How one defines Christ has profound implications for how one defines man.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ A. DeConick attributes this saying to her 'Kernel Gospel' and suggests that the sayings concerns Jesus, not the disciple: "He [Jesus] is not like the kings and prominent men dressed in soft clothing (L. 78) because he alone is blessed from the womb and is a prophet speaking God's word (L. 79). He admonishes the wealthy to be kings, but warns them that God is not the God of kings and powerful men... In the complete Gospel, the accretion preceding L. 81 would have provided a new hermeneutic for this saying. Master of the body was demanded (L. 80 which included complete renunciation of personal wealth and power (L. 81). In this way, the words of Jesus in L. 81 were heard as support for encratic praxis." (A. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 245-246). Though I agree with DeConick's description of this saying, I feel that it is too invested in the themes of the major redaction to be considered part of the formative stratum. Moreover, the fascinating part of this saying (and *Thomas* 110) is that it is applied to the *reader* as well as Jesus. In this sense, Jesus' praxis becomes the reader's praxis, and in this way the reader too can enter Eden.

⁴⁵⁴ A. DeConick considers this form in *Thomas* 110 to be a later variation on *Thomas* 81. She writes that, "The meaning of the saying has shifted from Jesus' criticism of the ruling class to the community's criticism of the world and possessions. It reflects a theme characteristic of the accretions -- disdain for the world." (A. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 290-291). Though I agree that Jesus certainly critiques wealth in the formative stratum, I think that because this saying so closely parallels the structure of the saying in *Thomas* 81, I consider them both redactional.

⁴⁵⁵ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 37. Emphasis original.

⁴⁵⁶ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 39.

⁴⁵⁷ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 39.

This is certainly the case in the major redaction; for in the major redaction Jesus acts as a model to be followed by the readers -- as *Thomas* 85 puts it: "Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth. *But he was not worthy of you.* For, if he had been worthy (of you) [he would] not [have tasted] death." The reader, like Jesus, is to become *greater than* the first Adam. Though the serpent (in the *Life of Adam and Eve*) refused to bow before the first Adam, he will bow down before the 'Second Adam' who is Jesus,⁴⁵⁸ and the successful reader of the *Gospel of Thomas*. The reader too can experience Jesus' experience in *Thomas* 77, as is indicated in *Thomas* 67:

67. Jesus said: "Whoever knows (the) all, if he (still) needs (to know) himself, he (still) needs (the) all."

All of humanity and Jesus share the first immortal image of God -- this is the true self. If one 'knows' this first true self, then one 'knows all.' This first image of God (the true self) exists within the body, but it must be brought forth (*Thomas* 70). This 'first image' never dies, but the 'second image,' which depends on a body, does die. Cultivating this process of bringing forth the 'first image of God' in Genesis 1 is the primary interest of the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The first creation story was intended to culminate in the Sabbath rest on the Seventh Day -- and this was, I believe, the 'rest' appealed in the elaborative move in the Greek version of *Thomas* 2.2 above.⁴⁵⁹ Consider the following from the Genesis narrative:

Genesis 2:1-4a: 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Philippians 2:9-11.

⁴⁵⁹ Baarda, T., "If You do not Sabbatize the Sabbath: the Sabbath as God or World in Gnostic Understanding (Ev Thom Log 27) ," in: R. Broek; T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld, eds., *Knowledge of God*, 1988, 178-201; Brown, P., "The Sabbath and the week in Thomas 27," *Novum Testamentum* 34, 1992, 193.

blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.⁴⁶⁰

G. Anderson notes that “there is no mention of Adam or Eve enjoying the Sabbath, only God.”⁴⁶¹ However, in *Thomas* there is both a mention of a ‘seven-day-old child’ (*Thomas* 4.1)⁴⁶² and an exhortation to make the Sabbath a *true* Sabbath (*Thomas* 27), that is, a true state of rest:

4.1 Jesus said: “The person old in days will not hesitate to ask a small child of seven days about the place of life, and he will live.”

27. Jesus said: “If you do not fast to the world you will not find the kingdom. If you do not make the Sabbath a (true) Sabbath, you will not see the Father.”⁴⁶³

In the Hebrew Bible humans must wait until the Sinai experience to be invited into God’s Sabbath,⁴⁶⁴ but in *Thomas* the Sabbath is a primordial fact and remains accessible in the present. The Father it seems *still rests* in (or on) the Seventh Day; this is why *Thomas* 27.2 associates the Sabbath with seeing the Father.

However, I am getting ahead of the story here. In order to understand the first creation and the first image we need to understand what went wrong in the second creation. The

⁴⁶⁰ All biblical quotes are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*.

⁴⁶¹ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection*, 212.

⁴⁶² S. Davies also notes the relationship between this ‘seven-day-old child’ and the Seventh Day: “The specific symbolism of a ‘seven-day-old’ infant suggests a time before circumcision, which was performed on the eighth day (and according to Thomas, circumcision is a senseless custom [saying 53]). The infant of seven days may also refer to the Image of God, who existed on the seventh day before the second round of creation brought Adam into being.” (Davies, S. *Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained*, 6.). According to A. DeConick, this saying “is responsive to a population shift within [the Thomasine] community, maintaining Sabbath observation when it appears to have challenged by new Gentile converts.” (A. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 132). While this is certainly possible, I think the connections with the Genesis 1 narrative indicate that the saying is less interested in responding to increased Gentile influence than it is in returning to the Seventh Day where the Father resides.

⁴⁶³ If I am right in considering the Eden story as the referential frame for the major redaction, then Quispel’s proposal that such a saying evinces particularly Jewish-Christian theology appears less persuasive.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection*, 27-35; 212.

‘second Adam’ (as opposed to the first human created in the image of God as male *and* female) was formed from dust of the earth (Genesis 2:6-7), hence the name ‘Adam,’ which derives from the Hebrew word for dust (*adamah*). God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a *living* being.” The major redactor of *Thomas* is very interested in this juxtaposition of the ‘*living*’ and the ‘*bodily*’; consider *Thomas* 29:

29.1 Jesus said: “*If* the flesh emerged from the spirit, it is a wonder. But *if* the spirit emerged from the body, that is a wonder of wonders!
 29.2 *Yet*, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty.”

The major redactor is uncertain about what came first, the spirit or the body, but is content to merely state the ultimate mystery: that we live in a body. As will be shown below, part of the Thomasine solution is to overcome the body and flesh and embrace life only in the living spirit (the first image of God). This is also reflected in the *Gospel of Philip* 16:

No one will hide a large valuable object in something large, but many a time one has tossed countless thousands into a thing worth a penny. Compare the soul. It is a precious thing and it came to be in a contemptible body.⁴⁶⁵

Because Adam is (by default it seems) ‘male’ (i.e. $\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$), even though no gender distinction (beyond the general descriptions of humanity, $\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$, *anthropōs*, which can both be taken broadly as ‘humankind’ as opposed to specifically ‘masculine-man-kind’) has been made yet in the Genesis narrative, he (as a male) is considered, by the major redactor, to be a ‘living spirit.’ In this sense, genderlessness is still ‘male’ for the major redactor. This helps make sense of the final dialogue in the *Gospel of Thomas*:

114.1 Simon Peter said to them: “Let Mary leave us for women do not deserve life.”
 114.2 Jesus said: “Look! I will lead her so that I might make her male, which will make her into a living spirit resembling you males.”

⁴⁶⁵ Consider also the ‘Hymn of the Pearl’ in the *Acts of Thomas*.

114.3 *For* any woman that makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.

The question posed by Peter in *Thomas* 114.1, like all the questions in *Thomas*, represents a misdirected inquiry. Jesus in *Thomas* 114.2-3 does not consent to the intentions of Peter's question but answers with wit and parody. The response does not mean: 'Yes you're right Peter, women aren't fit for life.' Rather, it reads more akin to: 'Peter, fine, then bring her here and I'll make her as good as you are (because you misunderstand everything I've said).' Jesus speaks in jest in this dialogue. The 'male' that Jesus promises to make Mary is not the type of male that Peter is; rather, this 'male' is the primordial *unisex* human being -- the first image.⁴⁶⁶ It seems in antiquity that even genderlessness was 'male,' as marked by the masculine definite article. Within the context of the pronouncements in *Thomas* 15, 101.3, and 105, it does appear that the major redactor considered sexual relations as barriers to life in the Genesis 1 condition. The tradition of Peter's challenging Mary's legitimacy is further elaborated in the *Gospel of Mary*:

When Mary had said this, she fell silent, since it was to this point that the Savior had spoken with her. But Andrew answered and said to the brethren, Say what you wish to say about what she has said. I at least do not believe that the Savior said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas. Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things. He questioned them about the Savior: Did He really speak privately with a woman and not openly to us? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us? Then Mary wept and said to Peter, My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I have thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior? Levi answered and said to Peter, Peter you have always been hot

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. *Thomas* 22:

22.1 Jesus saw little children being nursed. He said to his disciples: "These little children are like those who enter the Kingdom."

22.2 They said to him: "Will we enter the Kingdom as little children?"

22.3 Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one (CNAΥ OYA), and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when you make the male and the female into a solitary one (OYA OYOT), so that the male is not male nor the female female. And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image (IKON) in place of an image (IKON), then you will enter [the kingdom]."

tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why He loved her more than us. Rather let us be ashamed and put on the perfect Man, and separate as He commanded us and preach the gospel, not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Savior said. And when they heard this they began to go forth to proclaim and to preach.⁴⁶⁷

If the tradition in *Thomas* 114 bears any relation to the *Gospel of Mary* -- and I think it does -- then it is quite clear that it is Peter that is being parodied in 114, not Mary Magdalene. The 'male-ness' that Jesus refers to in the major redaction is not a gendered male-ness but a gender-less (or: unisex) image that is *referred to as male*, even though it is not sexually 'male.'

In Genesis 2:21-23 it is Eve (the 'female') that derives from Adam (the 'male'), so it is understandable that the major redactor would recommend that women become male, rather than men become female. In *Thomas* 22.2-3 the major redactor recommends that the reader make the two into the one, "so that the male is not male nor the female female."

This second creation story begins with Adam alone in the Garden with but one rule:

Genesis 2:15-17: The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

G. Anderson notes that "The tree of life, though set in the very center of the Garden, is not revealed to Adam. For Ephrem, the tree of life was at the center of the Holy of Holies and the tree of knowledge guarded its port of entry, consequently Adam and Eve were ignorant of it."⁴⁶⁸ If the Garden of Eden was considered an aspect of or foreshadowing of the Temple in Jerusalem, then God's seemingly rash move to cast out Adam and Eve from the Garden in

⁴⁶⁷ *Gospel of Mary*, 9.1-10.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection*, 214.

Genesis 3:22-24⁴⁶⁹ appears less callous; for if the Garden was the Tabernacle of God, then Adam and Eve would have died because they were too 'unclean' to stand on holy ground, especially in the Holy of Holies (which was marked by the Tree of Life).⁴⁷⁰ However, this interpretation does not soften the difficult prospect that God exiled Adam and Eve so that they *would not* eat of the Tree of Life *and live forever* -- something that the major redactor of *Thomas* is keen on attaining. Ephrem, in his *Hymns on Paradise* connects the Garden to the Tabernacle as follows:

For God did not give permission
For Adam to enter
The inner realm of the Tabernacle,
For this was kept under guard
That he might do well in his service
Within the outer realm of the Tabernacle.⁴⁷¹

In the second creation story God seems to 'develop' as much as Adam does. In Genesis 2:18-24 God declares that, "It is not good that the human should be alone; I will make him a helpmate as his partner."⁴⁷² Then, in a rather comical fashion, God parades various animals before Adam to find which one he prefers. It is God that first notices Adam's need for a partner, but God appears uncertain about what Adam wants:

Genesis 2:19-20: So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

⁴⁶⁹ Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection*, especially chapter two.

⁴⁷¹ St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*, 3.16.

⁴⁷² Author's translation.

The ironic part of the story is that both Adam and God are uncertain about who or what would serve as Adam's partner. It's as if God set out creating animals in an effort to impress Adam and discover what it was that Adam wanted. In this manner both Adam and God are as much a mystery to one another as the other; neither knew what the other wanted. They learn, rather, from each other. Then, suddenly for Adam, a breakthrough: "then the man said, 'This *at last* is boney of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, *for out of Man this one was taken.*'"⁴⁷³ Anderson notes that some interpretations, such as the Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamot*, 63a, suggest that "This Biblical verse teaches that Adam attempted to have sex with all the beasts and animals but his sexual desire was not cooled off by them."⁴⁷⁴ This association with Adam's animal-like search for a partner is reflected in the Syrian *Book of Thomas*:

The savior said, "All bodies [...] the beasts are begotten [...] it is evident like [...] this, too, those that are above [...] things that are visible, but they are visible in their own root, and it is their fruit that nourishes them. But these visible bodies survive by devouring creatures similar to them with the result that the bodies change. Now that which changes will decay and perish, and has no hope of life from then on, since that body is bestial. So just as the body of the beasts perishes, so also will these formations perish. *Do they not derive from intercourse like that of the beasts? If it, too derives from intercourse, how will it beget anything different from beasts?*"⁴⁷⁵

This second creation narrative marks a significant departure from the first creation where the initial image of God was *both* male *and* female. For the *Gospel of Thomas* this represents a problem, a dilemma.

⁴⁷³ Genesis 2:23. Author's translation.

⁴⁷⁴ Cited in Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 43.

⁴⁷⁵ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 37.

The problem that this second creation narrative presented to the major redactor was the 'separation of the sexes'; *this was the fall*. The conclusion statement in Genesis 2:24 -- "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become *one flesh*" -- is taken to be the solution in the major redaction. That is, the 'two' (i.e. the male and female, Adam and Eve) are to be made *one as in the first image from the first creation -- male and female as one image*. This is expressed most clearly in the elaborative move by the major redactor in *Thomas* 22.2-3:

22.1 Jesus saw little children being nursed. He said to his disciples: "These little children are like those who enter the Kingdom."

22.2 They said to him: "Will we enter the Kingdom as little children?"

22.3 Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when you make the male and the female into a solitary one, so that the male is not male nor the female female. And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]."

This elaborative accretion represents the recovery of the first image before the separation. In this sense, when the Genesis narrative proclaims that "a man will leave his father and his mother" and cling to his wife, the major redactor understands a *rediscovery* of the first image where *male and female are one flesh, one image, and one person*. This is what the major redactor intends to communicate: the rediscovery of the primordial image in Genesis 1:26-28. The above elaboration in *Thomas* 22.3 expresses this point in the following thematic principles:

1) "When you make the two one" = when the man joins with the woman, as in Genesis 2:24.

Curiously, the major redactor does not interpret the 'becoming one flesh' as marriage, but

as the *rediscovery of the primordial male-and-female image of the first creation*. This is in line with much of Syrian Christian theology.⁴⁷⁶

- 2) “When you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below” recalls the elaboration in *Thomas* 3.2: “Rather, the kingdom is *within you and outside of you*.” The saying in *Thomas* 89 also appeals to this notion of the equality between the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’:

89. Jesus said: “Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not understand that *the one who created the inside is also the one that created the outside?*”

This tradition is also paralleled in *Gospel of Philip* 54:

The Lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and a redemption and a bridal chamber. [...] he said, “*I came to make the things below like the things above, and the things outside like those inside*. I came to unite them in the place.” [...] here through types [...] and images.⁴⁷⁷

- 3) “And when you make the male and the female into a solitary one (ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ), so that the male is not male nor the female female” introduces a major Thomasine and Syrian Christian theme: *becoming a solitary one*. This is in fulfillment of the declaration in Genesis 2:24. This plays prominently in the *Gospel of Thomas*, especially within the major redaction’s elaborative moves:

4.3 *And* they will come to be one alone (ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ).

49. Jesus said: “Blessed are the solitaires (ΜΟΝΟΧΟC) and chosen (ones), for you will find the kingdom, for are from it and will return there.”

75. Jesus said: “Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires (ΜΟΝΟΧΟC) are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber.”

23.1 Jesus said: “I will choose you, one (ΟΥΔ) from a thousand and two (CΝΔΥ) from ten thousand.”

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Vööbus, A., *Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church*. (Brill, 1951).

⁴⁷⁷ Emphasis mine.

Greek -- 30. Jesus said: "Where there are [three, they are] Godless, where there is one alone, I say I am with that one."

Coptic -- <<30. Jesus said: "Where there are three gods, they are Gods, where there are two (CNAΥ) or one (OYΔ), I am with them.>>

- 4) "And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image (IKΩN) in place of an image (IKΩN), then you will enter [the kingdom]." Here the replacing of the 'second' image with the 'first' is made most explicit -- hence the phrase "an image in place of an image." This means the first image in place of the second 'gendered image.' This is how one enters the Kingdom, for the Kingdom is in Genesis 1. And to enter this Kingdom, one must reclaim the first image of creation.

The elaborative move in *Thomas* 11.2 also presents a response to Genesis 2:24 -- "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become *one flesh*":

11.1 Jesus said: "This heaven will pass away and the one above it will pass away."

11.2 *Those who are dead do not live and those who live will not die.* In the days you ate what was dead you were making it that which lives. When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do? *On the day you were one you became two. But when you become two what will you do?*

The first sentence in *Thomas* 11.2 has a number of elaborated parallels in the *Gospel of Philip*, which I will list below:

Philip 2.2: Those who are heirs to the dead are themselves dead, and they inherit the dead. Those who are heirs to what is living are alive, and they are heirs to both what is living and the dead. The dead are heirs to nothing. For how can he who is dead inherit? If he who is dead inherits what is living he will not die, but he who is dead will live even more.

Philip 3.1 A Gentile does not die, for he has never lived in order that he may die. He who has believed in the truth has found life, and this one is in danger of dying, for he is alive.

Philip 15: Those who say that the Lord died first and (then) rose up are in error, for he rose up first and (then) died. If one does not first attain the resurrection, he will not die. As God lives, he would [...].

These hermeneutical interests demonstrate a clear relationship with the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*, especially in the following two sayings:

59. Jesus said: "Look after the Living One while you are living, lest you die and (then) seek to see that one. You will not find the power to behold."

111.2 *And* the one who lives from the Living One will not see death.

The resurrection in the major redaction is not a future event, but a present reality. This coheres with the framing saying of the *Gospel of Thomas* as a whole in *Thomas 1*: "Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings will not taste death."

Beyond the first two clauses in *Thomas 22.3* above, there are the two questions that complete the cluster, which I'd like to concentrate on for the moment. The first question -- "When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do?" -- already has the converse of its answer supplied right before it: "In the days you ate what was dead you were making it that which lives." Thus, the answer to the question is: 'You will eat *living* things.' Where, then, is one to find 'living things' to eat? In Paradise (Eden):

19.1 Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who came into being *from* the beginning, *before* he came to be."

19.2 *If* you become my disciples and listen to my sayings, these stones will become your servants.

19.3 *For there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not taste death.*

A. DeConick writes that, "The person who feasts on the trees in Paradise has no need for normal food because he or she regained the primordial condition and eats from the trees as God has originally intended..."⁴⁷⁸ These five trees are 'five virtues' that represent the 'fruits' of

⁴⁷⁸ DeConick, A.D., *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 105.

the Tree of Life. This is evinced by the fact that whoever “knows them will not taste death.”

These spiritual fruits are also described in the Syrian *Book of Steps*:

But these spiritual fruits are: ‘Let us put on mercy, pity, harmony, peace, and the glory of our Lord; that is, let us submit ourselves to one another through these spiritual fruits with love, patience, kindness, lowliness, endurance, moderation, and holiness without desire. These are the spiritual fruits on which the saints feed in Eden while separating these from the [commandments] that are hard for infants, so that may see these and, leaving [alone] the hard [commandments], cling to things that are humble... the Creator commanded Adam, ‘your mind being in heaven as an inhabitant, but your body being on earth as a stranger and a sojourner. (*Memra* 21, 2, 233-234)⁴⁷⁹

The second question in *Thomas* 22.2 -- “But when you become two what will you do?” -- also has the converse of its answer in the preceding statement: “On the day you were one you became two.” Thus the answer to the question is quite simple: ‘*You will become one.*’ Is this not the same as the conclusion statement in Genesis 2:24? -- “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become *one flesh*.” This may also assist us in our interpretation of the enigmatic saying in *Thomas* 105: “Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!” For, if the person knows their mother and father it

⁴⁷⁹ Consider also these other parallels from the *Book of Steps*:

Memra 21.1, 231

Now I will begin to explain about the good tree, how it exists and how it stands, and concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is the evil one, toil, anxiety, and the thought of transitory things by which Adam and Eve tasted death. For through it they came to know evil, which they had not known. After they ate from it they knew evil, which is death, [which] they had not known.

Memra 21, 1, 232

The whole [reason] why they [the children of Adam] are bound to the earth is because they have not emptied themselves of it. Neither do they learn from God nor from a person of God how they may be bound up with our Lord in that world in which there is no death where they will eat the life-giving words of our Lord. They shall eat our Lord and live and become great and be perfected through him.

All material quoted from the *Book of Steps* are from Kitchen, R.A. and M.F.G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004). They are listed according to the memra number and the page number in Kitchen and Parmentier.

implies that they have yet to leave them and become one flesh. This sentiment is evinced in both the Syrian *Book of Thomas* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*:

Whence it is with reason that after the Word had told about the End, Salome saith: 'Until when shall men continue to die?' (Now, the Scripture speaks of man in two senses, the one that is seen, and the soul: and again, of him that is in a state of salvation, and him that is not: and sin is called the death of the soul) and it is advisedly that the Lord makes an answer: 'So long as women bear children.' (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* iii. 9. 64)

The Lord said to Salome when she inquired: How long shall death prevail? 'As long as ye women bear children,' not because life is an ill, and the creation evil: but as showing the sequence of nature: for in all cases birth is followed by decay. (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* iii. 6. 45)

But those who set themselves against God's creation because of continence, which has a fair-sounding name, quote also those words which were spoken to Salome, of which I made mention before. They are contained, I think (or I take it) in the Gospel according to the Egyptians. For they say that the Savior himself said: I came to destroy the works of the female.' By female he means lust: by works, birth and decay. (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* iii. 9. 63)⁴⁸⁰

Thomas answered and said, "What have we to say in the face of these things? What shall we say to blind men? What doctrine should we express to these miserable mortals who say, 'We came to do good and not curse,' and yet claim, 'Had we not been begotten in the flesh, we would not have known iniquity?'" (*Book of Thomas*)

The answer to the second question in *Thomas* 22.2 remains clear, and it is this desire to 'become one' that dominates much of the major redactor's purposes.

Eden as a Temple

The geography and condition of Eden is essential to understanding and appreciating the hermeneutical interests of the major redactor. G. Anderson's recognition that Eden was treated as a temple in early Jewish and Christian thought⁴⁸¹ offers a very important contextual consideration for much of the major redaction. Anderson offers these remarks

⁴⁸⁰ Cited in M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1924), 10-12.

⁴⁸¹ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection*, 46-48.

concerning the place of sexual contact in and outside Eden according to the extra-canonical Jewish text of *Jubilees*:

[A]ccording to a strict reading of the Bible, Adam was the first placed in Eden (Gen. 2:9) and afterwards given a mate (2:21-23). Evidently, much like a novelist or a screenwriter, our interpreter [in *Jubilees* 3:6, 9] has understood the story of Eve's creation as a flashback to an earlier moment in the tale. The Genesis story does not unfold in a simple chronological order. Adam, Eve, and the animals exist together outside of Eden. After the naming of the animals and the presentation of Eve, this first couple underwent a period of purification ("after forty days were completed") and only then could they enter Eden. *In this sacred temple-like garden, they refrained from sexual contact...* For the writer of *Jubilees*, Eden was not just a horticultural marvel. It was regarded as the pinnacle of holiness itself. Eden was like a temple and the function of Adam and Eve was similar to that of the priesthood. They must be chaste before their maker.⁴⁸²

According to this interpretation, the geography of the Garden of Eden was that of the Tabernacle. The Holy of Holies was the Tree of Life, where only the chaste priest could enter; the inner courtyard districts of the Tabernacle was the Garden of Eden itself, and this is where Adam and Eve, like the Israelites, stood near God in purity; and, finally, the regions outside the Tabernacle were like those outside the Garden of Eden, and it is there that Adam and Eve were created and permitted to engage in sexual contact.⁴⁸³

The Garden of Eden story also begs the question of Adam and Eve's age. According to the Syrian *Book of Steps* they were children, not adults:

It is written, 'Adam and Eve were naked, but they could not see their own nakedness,' that is, like infants who are bare and do not know nakedness is. In this, they did not have a despicable thought, but if they had known, they would have put on clothes. Therefore, what man or woman is able to stand before one another naked and not have the lust in their heart aroused, seeing one another naked, apart from those whose heart is pure from lust and who are holy in their heart and bodies, just as Adam and Eve were before they sinned? On account of this our Lord said, 'If you do not turn back and become like these children, you will

⁴⁸² Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection*, 46.

⁴⁸³ This is adapted from G. A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*, 47.

not become like that first creation of Adam,' who had yes transgressed against the commandment of his Maker. (*Memra* 15, 141)

Before Adam and Eve had sinned, they were naked like infants, but since the lust in their heart was not aroused they were not ashamed, just as infants are not ashamed. Once they had sinned, and sin existed in their heart, directing them to desire intercourse, [then] 'They saw that they were naked'; that is, they knew the shame they had not known. Just as from the [moment] sin existed in the heart of Adam and Eve, and they desired intercourse. (*Memra* 15, 141).

In the *Book of Steps* one must return to this initial condition of innocence and "become like these children," otherwise they would "not become like that first creation of Adam." This 'first creation of Adam' is the first image that was both male and female. In the major redaction this sentiment is most clearly expressed in *Thomas* 37:

37.1 His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"

37.2 Jesus said: "When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take up your clothes and put them under your feet like little children, and tread on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living One and you will not be afraid."

This is also expressed in the elaborative move in *Thomas* 21.4:

21.1 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?"

21.2 He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs."

21.3 When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!'

21.4 (*But*) they will strip naked in front of them in order to abandon it, so that the field is returned to them.

The saying that precedes *Thomas* 37 in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* has been shortened so as to emphasize the aspect of clothing and lack of worry:

36. Jesus said, "Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, [about your food, about what you're going to eat, or about your clothing--] what you are going to wear."

36. Jesus said, "*Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, what you are going to wear.*"

In the *Book of Steps* there is also a relationship between being like a naked child in Eden and not worrying:

When you see from now on a child who is not concerned about how to dress and feed himself, say, 'This is my [way of life].' When you see him not desiring a wife and capable of crying at any time, say, 'These are mine, I will become without desire and cry at any time.' When you find him neither judging nor perceiving [anyone as] evil people and adulterers say, 'These are mine.' (*Memra* 16, 164).

What, however, are these 'garments' that the children (like Adam and Eve) must strip? In popular imagination Adam and Eve were clothed with fig leaves in the Garden and are seen leaving the Garden *still* naked as in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling. But in the Genesis narrative they are clothed *by God* before they leave the Garden: "And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them... [then] God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden"⁴⁸⁴ In the Genesis narrative one wonders why God took the initiative? According to G. Anderson, some Rabbis (and Christians as in *Thomas*) "understood the phrase 'garments of skin' not as a separate piece of clothing to be put on like a jacket but as human flesh itself."⁴⁸⁵ In this sense, then, the initial image of God in Genesis 1 was not only male and female, but immaterial. It is only after their transgression that God clothes them with 'garments of skin.'

In the *Gospel of Philip* we see a continued elaborative trajectory involving the stripping off of the fleshly garment donned after the 'Fall':

Philip 49.2: While we are in this world, it is fitting for us to acquire the resurrection, *so that when we strip off the flesh, we may be found in rest* and not walk in the middle. For many go astray on the way. For it is good to come forth from the world before one has sinned.

⁴⁸⁴ Genesis 3:21.

⁴⁸⁵ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection*, 124. Italicized in the original.

As in the major redaction, the condition as naked children *was* the condition of perfection in the Garden of Eden. In the *Gospel of Philip* these new 'spiritual garments' are more powerful than the person wearing them:

Philip 17: Some are afraid lest they rise naked. Because of this they wish to rise in the flesh, and they do not know that it is those who wear the flesh who are naked. It is those who [...] to unclothe themselves who are not naked. "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 15:50). What is this which will not inherit? This which is on us. But what is this, too, which will inherit? It is that which belongs to Jesus and his blood. Because of this he said "He who shall not eat my flesh and drink my blood has not life in him" (Jn 6:53). What is it? His flesh is the word, and his blood is the Holy Spirit. He who has received these has food and he has drink and clothing. I find fault with the others who say that it will not rise. Then both of them are at fault. You say that the flesh will not rise. But tell me what will rise, that we may honor you. You say the Spirit in the flesh, and it is also this light in the flesh. (But) this too is a matter which is in the flesh, for whatever you shall say, you say nothing outside the flesh. It is necessary to rise in this flesh, since everything exists in it. In this world, those who put on garments are better than the garments. In the Kingdom of Heaven, the garments are better than those that put them on.⁴⁸⁶

With the parallels in both the *Book of Steps* and the *Gospel of Philip* (as well as the *Dialogue of the Savior* and the *Book of Thomas*, which will be illustrated below), we marshal additional evidence for a Syrian provenance for the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. However, it is important to acknowledge that this Genesis speculation is hardly the domain of the Syrian tradition alone. The reason I connect it specifically with Syria here has to do with the *Gospel of Thomas'* Syrian provenance (a point to be made in chapter four).

⁴⁸⁶ Compare *Philip* 65 and 82:

Philip 65: The powers do not see those who are clothed in the perfect light, and consequently are not able to detain them. One will clothe himself in this light sacramentally in the union.

Philip 82: The cup of prayer contains wine and water, since it is appointed as the type of the blood for which thanks is given. And it is full of the Holy Spirit, and it belongs to the wholly perfect man. When we drink this, we shall receive for ourselves the perfect man. The living water is a body. It is necessary that we put on the living man. Therefore, when he is about to go down into the water, he unclothes himself, in order that he may put on the living man.

The Major Redaction and the Beginning

Now that the story and geography of the Beginning in Genesis 1-3 has been outlined, I will now turn to the major redactional sayings themselves. What follows is a thematic organization and consideration of these sayings with the Genesis 1-3 narrative as the referential matrix. Unlike the apocalyptic, Jewish-Christian, and biblical demiurgical (i.e. 'gnosticism') contexts, the Genesis 1-3 context derives from the major redactional sayings themselves; it is an internal context rather than an external context associated with a particular meta-narrative of Christian beginnings. This claim, I believe, will be substantiated below from the sayings themselves.

The first thematic set of sayings I would like to consider are those that bring us 'back to the beginning.' Consider first *Thomas* 18:

18.1 The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us, how will our end be?"
Jesus said: "Have you discovered the beginning that you ask about the end?
For, in the place where the beginning is, there the end will be."
18.2 Blessed is the one who takes his stand in the beginning
He will know the end. And he will not experience death.

As is often the case in *Thomas*, the initial framing questions represent an erroneous view that sets up Jesus' response. In this sense, there is no 'end' per se, but a rediscovery of the beginning. In the major redaction the door is opened to the condition of the initial creation once again. The second clause in *Thomas* 18.2 may have been appended to the initial dialogue complex when the major redactor inserted the tradition. In *Thomas* 18.2 we learn what *must* happen, but not *how* one is to go about 'standing in the beginning,' this is what many of the other sayings in the major redaction hope to communicate.

The next saying that brings us back to the beginning is the aforementioned sayings cluster in *Thomas* 19:

19.1 Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who came into being *from* the beginning, *before* he came to be."

19.2 *If* you become my disciples and listen to my sayings, these stones will become your servants.

19.3 *For* there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not experience death.

The first sentence appeals to the 'first image' of God (Genesis 1:26-28) that preceded the separation of the sexes in Genesis 2:18-24. Because all of humanity has this first image within, all of humanity is blessed. According to the tradition outlined above, the first image was immaterial and the second was 'fleshly' by virtue of its being dressed in 'garments of skin' (Genesis 3:21). Thus *Thomas* 19.1 responds to the preceding tradition in *Thomas* 18: in both instances the reader must return to the first creation before the separation of the sexes and the donning of garments of skin. This first sentence is also directly paralleled (and/or elaborated) in *Gospel of Philip* 43: The Lord said, "Blessed is he who is before he came into being. For he who is, has been and shall be." There is no death in this primordial condition because life is not contained in an 'impoverished'⁴⁸⁷ body and/or flesh.⁴⁸⁸

The sentence in *Thomas* 19.2 echoes Jesus' response to the tempter in Q:

Q 4:1-4, 9-12, 5-8, 13 The Temptations of Jesus

1 And Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit 2 to be, tempted by the devil. And «he ate nothing» for forty days, .. he became hungry. 3 And the devil told him: *If you are God's Son, order that these stones become loaves.* 4 And Jesus answered him: It is written: A person is not to live only from bread.

9 The devil, took him along to Jerusalem and put him on the tip of the temple and told him: If you are God's Son, throw yourself down. 10 For it is written: He will command his angels about you, 11 and on their hands they will bear you, so that you do not strike your foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus in reply, told him: It is written: Do not put to the test the Lord your God.

⁴⁸⁷ *Thomas* 3.4 *If, however, you do not come to know yourselves then you dwell in poverty and you are the poverty.* *Thomas* 29.2 *Yet, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty.*

⁴⁸⁸ *Thomas* 87. Jesus said: "Damn the body that depends on a body; and damn to the soul that depends on these two."

Thomas 112. Jesus said: "Damn the flesh that depends on the soul, and damn the soul that depends on the flesh."

5 And the devil took him along to a very high, mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, 6 and told him: All these I will give you, 7 if you bow down before me. 8 And in reply, Jesus told him: It is written: Bow down to the Lord your God, and serve only him. 13 And the devil left him.⁴⁸⁹

Whether the major redactor knew this particular Jesus temptation story is uncertain, but it seems to me that at least part of a shared tradition is being used. What is interesting, however, is that the major redactor is applying these words to the reader. It is as if the reader experiences the words that 'the Devil' tried to tempt Jesus with, but ironically, these words are now being applied to the reader *by Jesus*. Yet, this is no 'temptation.' It is, rather, an appeal to live as the first Adam was intended to: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and *subdue it*; and *have dominion over* the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (Genesis 1:28). Adam was meant to 'rule' over the earth. As was stated above, one 'rules' in the Jesus tradition by being a humble servant:

81. Jesus said: "Whoever has grown rich should rule. But whoever has power should renounce."

110. Jesus said: "Whoever has found the world and become rich should renounce the world."

'Richness' in the major redaction is associated not with economic wealth but with self-discovery. This is apparent in the elaborations in *Thomas* 3.3-4:

3.3 When you come to know yourselves then you will be known, and you will realize that *you are* the sons of the Living Father.

3.4 *If, however,* you do not come to know yourselves then you dwell in poverty and you are the poverty.

The opposite of 'richness' or self-knowledge in the major redaction is 'poverty,' and this poverty is to be equated with 'the world,' as the following sayings demonstrate:

⁴⁸⁹ This text is taken from the International Q Project (Claremont University).

80. Jesus said: "Whoever has known the world has found the body. And whoever has found the body, the world is no longer worthy of that person."

29.1 Jesus said: "If the flesh emerged from the spirit, it is a wonder. But if the spirit emerged from the body, that is a wonder of wonders"!

29.2 Yet, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty.

The 'world' that is being referred to is the realm of the animal kingdom and the fleshly body that is associated with it. For the major redactor, as for St. Ephrem, this domain is marked by its being outside of Eden. This is where Adam and Eve were cast out to, and it is there that they 'knew' each other sexually. For the major redactor, sexuality parallels the behavior of the animals, which is to be avoided. One must, in the major redaction, overcome the realm of the body and flesh (*Thomas* 87 and 112) and embrace the former life in first creation before the garments of skin were provided. One must not only strip the fleshly garments, but renounce the animal way of life, which is associated with sex. The later narrative in the *Book of Thomas* makes this identification abundantly clear:

4. Now Thomas answered and said to the savior, "Tell us about these things that you say are not visible, but are hidden from us."

5. The savior said, "*All bodies [...] the beasts are begotten [...] it is evident like [...] this, too, those that are above [...] things that are visible, but they are visible in their own root, and it is their fruit that nourishes them. But these visible bodies survive by devouring creatures similar to them with the result that the bodies change. Now that which changes will decay and perish, and has no hope of life from then on, since that body is bestial. So just as the body of the beasts perishes, so also will these formations perish. Do they not derive from intercourse like that of the beasts? If it, too derives from intercourse, how will it beget anything different from beasts? So, therefore, you are babes until you become perfect.*"⁴⁹⁰

The *Gospel of Philip* also juxtaposes this distinction between the 'animal way of life' with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden:

Philip 78: God [...] garden. Man [...] garden. There are [...] and [...] of God. [...] The things which are in [...] I wish. This garden is the place where they will say to me, "[...] eat this or do not eat that, just as you wish." In the place

⁴⁹⁰ J. Turner's translation. Emphasis mine.

where I will eat all things is the Tree of Knowledge. That one killed Adam, but here the Tree of Knowledge made men alive. The law was the tree. It has power to give the knowledge of good and evil. It neither removed him from evil, nor did it set him in the good, but it created death for those who ate of it. For when he said, "Eat this, do not eat that", it became the beginning of death.

The *Book of Steps* describes the creation of material bodies as a result of a distraction during the primordial condition of immaterial contemplation in heaven:

'Adam and Eve were naked and their nakedness was not apparent to them.' But after *they had abandoned heaven and loved the earth, their mind came from heaven to their bodies, [and] then they saw that they were naked.* For they were in heaven while they were walking on the earth. They were speaking by their bodies as our Lord had shown them in this last will of which he spoke, 'I have come so that I may carry out your will, O God,' that one that Adam had done away with at creation. (*Memra* 21, 8, 239)

In the above passage, the initial nakedness of Adam and Eve was not necessarily 'bodily nakedness' but a condition of existence without material flesh. The *Book of Steps* illustrates how it was that the immaterial images created in Genesis 1 were able to act as if they were embodied in Genesis 2-3: "For they were in heaven while they were walking on the earth." In this sense, the immaterial image of God is that which is directed toward God in primordial contemplation, whereas the bodily image of God is that which was created as a result of a turning away from this concentration -- from heaven toward the earth. *Memra* 21, 10 echoes this descent from the immaterial heavens above to the earth below, while also equating 'wealth' with the 'spiritual,' as in *Thomas* 29:

However, in the end, Adam had a will, and if he had not so desired, the evil one would not have oppressed him [during] the thousand years he lived on the earth. Therefore, Adam and Eve were persuaded and turned their minds to the earth and descended from heaven, and their mind was on the earth like their bodies. They decided to descend from the heavenly Paradise that is the perfect original, and lived on the earth that is the shadow of that heavenly Paradise. Adam descended and stood in the earthly paradise that is the shadow of heaven. They became poor from the supernal wealth and departed to pursue the lower wealth, which is whatever passes away and is dissolved in one hour. (*Memra* 21, 10, 241)

In the major redaction a similar understanding of the plight of the body and animal kingdom is expressed in *Thomas* 60:

60. <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea.
He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb."
They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat it."
He said to them: "While it is living he will not eat it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (and then he can eat it)."
They said to him: "There is no other way."
He said to them: "*You also, seek after a place of repose, lest you become corpses and get consumed.*"

The problem that the bodily condition presents to the major redactor is the most assured fact of human existence: death. One can imagine the major redactor observing the rotting corpse of someone he or she cared for and determining that this condition cannot and will not be his or her own condition. How, then, does the major redactor go about escaping this inevitable condition? By recognizing that the human person is not the body or flesh, but the spirit within. This spirit within is the initial image of God that remains immaterial. This recalls the saying in *Thomas* 29 where the major redactor stands in awe of the prospect of the spirit emerging from the physical; but what is most important in this recognition is the problem that it sets up definitively: "*Yet, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty.*"⁴⁹¹

This condition in the 'impoverished' world is exemplified by the eating of animals. In the initial creation narrative in Genesis 1:29-30 Adam is given "every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit" to eat, but God did not give animals, carcasses, or corpses to eat. For the major redactor, this condition demonstrates that humanity is still outside the Garden of Eden. According to St. Ephrem's map of Eden, the animal world exists outside the Garden, just as it would be kept outside the inner sanctum and

⁴⁹¹ *Thomas* 29.2.

the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. The major redactor has introduced two sayings that express this situation:

87. Jesus said: "Damn the body that depends on a body; and damn to the soul that depends on these two."

112. Jesus said: "Damn the flesh that depends on the soul, and damn the soul that depends on the flesh."

The first saying in *Thomas* 87 may be referring to the manner in which the human body depends on animal bodies by eating them. The human soul (i.e. the initial immaterial image) should not, says the major redactor, depend on the flesh or bodies of animals. In *Thomas* 112 we see a reversal of the positive bewilderment in *Thomas* 29. In *Thomas* 112 there is no awe, only frustration; whether the soul emerged from the flesh or body matters little, all that matters is that the soul must not depend on a body or flesh. In *Thomas* the consumption of flesh in any way results in loss. This is expressed cryptically in the enigmatic saying in *Thomas* 7:

7. Jesus said: "Blessed is the lion which the person eats – and the lion becomes a person. And cursed is the person whom the lion eats – and the lion becomes a person."

This saying is also paralleled in the Manichaean Psalm Book (257): "This lion that is within me, I have strangled. I have turned him out of my soul, him who ever defiles me."

In the major redaction the body and flesh are considered synonymous with the world. Thus, to recognize the body is to recognize the world for what it really is: the 'Real' that is driving toward its own death while also consuming other entities in an effort to delay this inevitable fact. To discover the world, then, is to discover that one's true self is not part of the world:

80. Jesus said: Whoever has known the world has found the body. And whoever has found the body, the world is no longer worthy of that person.

110. Jesus said: "Whoever has found the world and become rich should renounce the world."

111.3 *Does not Jesus say:* 'Whoever has found oneself, the world is not worthy of that person.'

To recognize the body and the world as the same substance is to become 'superior to the world,' and when one is superior one then rules over the world. This discovery of the self, though traumatic, does lead to life:

58. Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who is disturbed (by his discovery), he has found life."

I added the phrase -- "by his discovery" -- because I can't help but see a parallel structure in the elaborative move in *Thomas* 2.2:

2.2 And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed, and he will rule-as-a-king over all.

The Greek form of the above elaboration adds that the one who has found also "rests," which I propose is a veiled reference to God's rest on the Sabbath. It also reflects the association of 'ruling' with 'renouncing' as exhibited in *Thomas* 81 and 110. According to the major redactional sayings as a whole, what one finds in *Thomas* 2.2 and 58 is 'the body,' which is 'the world.'

In the major redaction there is no future eternal life, there is only the present (eternal) moment. This is expressed in the following sayings:

59. Jesus said: "Look after the Living One while you are living, lest you die and (then) seek to see that one. You will not find the power to behold."

111.2 *And* the one who lives from the Living One will not see death.

The 'life' that the major redactor refers to in the sayings above is a present condition, not a future one; but a present one that is 'timeless,' as in the initial image of God in Genesis 1. It is

in this sense that the Genesis 1 experience is accessible in the present, not in some future existence. According to the major redactor, once one has died it is too late, hence the phrase: “lest you die and (then) seek to see that one; you will not find the power to behold.” This condition was also mentioned in the aforementioned elaboration in *Thomas* 11.2:

11.2 *Those who are dead do not live and those who live will not die. In the days you ate what was dead you were making it that which lives. When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do? On the day you were one you became two. But when you become two what will you do?*

The first sentence in *Thomas* 11.2 suggests that when one “fasts to the world”⁴⁹² by recognizing it as a body, one has already broken the bonds of material existence and liberated the initial immaterial image of God. The absence of a *future* repose or resurrection of the dead is made most explicit in the two dialogue components below:

51.1 His disciples said to him: “When will the repose (ΑΝΑΥΠΑCIC) of the dead take place, and when will the new world come?”

51.2 He said to them: “That which you look for has come, but you did not recognize it.”

52.1 His disciples said to him: “Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and all have spoken within you.”

52.2 He said to them: “You have left out the Living One in your presence, and you spoke (only) about those who are dead.”

Plisch argues that ΑΝΑΥΠΑCIC (‘repose’), in *Thomas* 51.1 represents a scribal error which was, “presumably caused by the similar spelling and same length”⁴⁹³ of the intended word, ΑΝΑCΤΑCIC, ‘resurrection.’ It is also possible that ΑΝΑCΤΑCIC was amended to ΑΝΑΥΠΑCIC in

⁴⁹² *Thomas* 27.

⁴⁹³ Plisch, *Gospel of Thomas*, 132. DeConick also agree with this possibility (cf. DeConick, *Original Gospel of Thomas*, 183). Pokorný too agrees with this assessment (cf. Pokorný, *Gospel of Thomas*, 96).

order to make a verbal connection with the preceding saying in *Thomas* 50,⁴⁹⁴ which also uses the word $\lambda\alpha\lambda\upsilon\pi\alpha\varsigma\iota\varsigma$. DeConick suggests that the “reference to the ‘rest of the dead’ is a comment on the post-mortem state of the journeying soul in Hermetic tradition when it is reincorporated into God who exists at ‘rest.’”⁴⁹⁵ She argues further that:

this concept [of the Hermetic rest], however, has been recontextualized within traditional Jewish eschatological expectations, particularly the advent of the new world. Such expectations were held by an earlier constituency within the Thomasine community, but these have been replaced with a new expectation, a new explanatory schema, in face of their experience of disconfirmation when the Kingdom did not come.⁴⁹⁶

Though Plisch’s proposal is plausible, I am reluctant to assume scribal errors, when the major redactor may be doing something quite novel. The *Dialogue of the Savior* begins with a similar concern for $\lambda\alpha\lambda\upsilon\pi\alpha\varsigma\iota\varsigma$: “The Savior said to his disciples, ‘Already the time has come, brothers, for us to abandon our labor and *stand at rest*. For *whoever stands at rest will rest forever*.’”⁴⁹⁷ If *Thomas* 51 is placed in this context, it appears that $\lambda\alpha\lambda\upsilon\pi\alpha\varsigma\iota\varsigma$ is not a scribal error, but, rather, an interpretive decision. The question of the disciples in *Thomas* 51 is nearly the same as the question in *Dialogue of the Savior* 1: each ask when the repose of the dead will take place. In *Thomas* 51.2 Jesus declares that the ‘rest of the dead’ *has already come*, but that the disciples did not recognize it. Likewise, in the *Dialogue of the Savior*, Jesus exhorts the

⁴⁹⁴ 50.1 Jesus said: “If they say to you, ‘Where have you come from?’

50.2 Say to them, ‘We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image.’ If they say to you, ‘Is it you?’ say ‘We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living Father.’

50.3 If they ask you, ‘What is the sign of your Father in you?’ say, ‘It is movement and repose ($\lambda\alpha\lambda\upsilon\pi\alpha\varsigma\iota\varsigma$).’”

⁴⁹⁵ DeConick, A.D., *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 182.

⁴⁹⁶ DeConick, A.D., *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 182.

⁴⁹⁷ *Dialogue of the Savior*, 1. Stephen Emmels’ translation. Emphasis mine.

disciples to abandon their labors and stand at rest in the present.⁴⁹⁸ My argument that $\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{Y}\Pi\Delta\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$ was not a scribal error also receives support from what I consider an elaborative move by the major redactor in *Thomas* 90.2:

90.1 Jesus said: "Come to me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is gentle.

<<90.2 And you will find [rest] ($\bar{\text{M}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{N}$) for yourselves.">>⁴⁹⁹

90.2 *And you will find repose ($\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{Y}\Pi\Delta\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$) for yourselves.*⁵⁰⁰

It seems that *Thomas* 90 was probably a 'statement from authority' from *Ben Sirach*, (*Ecclesiastes*) 51:34-35: "And submit your neck to the yoke, and let your soul receive discipline: for she is near at hand to be found. Behold with your eyes how I have labored a little, and have found much rest to myself." I find no reason to assume that $\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{Y}\Pi\Delta\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$ here is a scribal error, and if isn't here then why should it be considered one in *Thomas* 51.1 above?

Further support for $\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{Y}\Pi\Delta\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$ not being a scribal error is supplied by its use in *Thomas* 50:

50.1 Jesus said: "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' Say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image.'

50.2 If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living Father.'

50.3 If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say, 'It is movement and repose ($\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{Y}\Pi\Delta\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$).'"

⁴⁹⁸ C. Hedrick notes that, "In Semitic antiquity it was believed that the dead would attain 'rest' (Sir 22:11; 30:17; 38:23), but the idea of the dead attaining rest was challenged by the idea of the renewal of the creation (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Esd 2:34; Rom 8:19-21; Rev 21:1), which raised the question of the eventual rest of the dead (2 Esd 7:75)." (Hedrick, C.W., *Unlocking the Secrets of the Gospel According to Thomas*, 104.)

⁴⁹⁹ This is a reconstruction of what I think may have been the earlier form from an earlier stratum of the *Thomas* tradition.

⁵⁰⁰ While DeConick considers this entire logion as part of the formative stratum⁴¹, I would argue that the word $\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{Y}\Pi\Delta\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$ suggests activity by the major redactor. DeConick simply amends this difficulty away by assuming that $\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{Y}\Pi\Delta\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$ is merely a misspelling of $\Delta\text{Y}\Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{P}\Delta\text{Y}\text{C}\text{I}\text{C}$. Within the *Ben Sirach* and Matthean traditions the second clause concerns 'rest' rather than 'repose.' (DeConick, A.D., *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 259).

This sayings complex makes it abundantly clear that the major redaction is appealing to the Genesis 1 experience of the first image. The disciples, according to *Thomas* 50, came from the light which was created by the Father in Genesis 1:3. Strangely, in the formulation above, this light that was created in the biblical narrative was also the ‘emergence’ of God himself.⁵⁰¹ This ‘light’ is, for the major redactor, the primordial fact of God’s existence, and yet this light is in a certain sense incorporeal. It is only through the ‘image’ (of God) that the Father is “made manifest.” This is echoed in *Thomas* 83:

83. Jesus said: “The images are manifested to humanity, and the light within them is hidden in the image of the Father’s light. He will be made manifest but his image is hidden away in his light.”⁵⁰²

I think the first sentence in this enigmatic saying means something like this: ‘The images of God (which are humans) are manifested to humanity as corporeal images, yet the light within them (which is the Father’s light) is hidden in the image of the Father’s light (which is the

⁵⁰¹ This concept is not without precedent in the early Christian world. In texts such as *The Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (i.e. the *Gospel of the Egyptians*) the term ΑΥΤΟΓΕΝΗΣ, ‘auto-genēs,’ is used which expressed self generation or creation.

⁵⁰² A. DeConick agrees that this saying reflects speculation about Genesis 1:26-28. She writes the following concerning this saying: “Thus the saying begins by affirming that human beings are the visible ‘images’ of God, images which contain a divine element, ‘the light’ (cf. [*Thomas*] 24). This internal divine light is concealed in the ‘image of the Father’s light.’ This represents a teaching that inside the individual person the divine element of light is contained in some type of internal image, form or body of God.” (A.D. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 248). The translation of this logion, however, presents a series of problems. U. Plisch notes that, “The Coptic text at hand does not only have an overload of genitive constructions (‘the image of the light of the Father’); the meaning remains utterly incomprehensible. The expression ‘the image of the light of the Father’ is simply nonsense, since the light of the Father does not have any image...” (Plisch, U.K., *Gospel of Thomas*, 193, footnote, 191-192). Plisch argues further that, “By contrast, the assumption of an easily explained scribal error and a minor emendation of the text make it possible to reconstruct a well-structured antithetic saying,” which he illustrates as follows:

Jesus says:
The images (of persons)
are visible to a person,
but the light in them is hidden in the image.
The light of the Father,
it will reveal itself,
but his (the Father’s) image is hidden by his light.¹³⁷

Plisch justifies this move by noting that, “The three letters next to each other a very similar: Μ Ν Τ.” (Plisch, U.K., *Gospel of Thomas*, 193, footnote 3).

human person as the image of God).’ What is important to remember for *Thomas* is that the Father’s image *is* the image of God, which is the human person. In this manner, the human person is the material representative of God. This is why in the second sentence it is stated that the Father “will be made manifest but his image will remain hidden away in his light.” The human person, as is stated in *Thomas* 50.2, is not the Father or the light, but rather, the children of the light. Thus the light of the Father is within the human person and *manifested as the human person*, but his ‘actual’ (immaterial) image is hidden in his ineffable light. The key point is that the human person is the image of God *manifested in materiality*, but God still retains his own image -- but this never becomes manifest because it is immaterial.⁵⁰³ For the major redactor, however, the important point is that the image of God is animated by God’s light. The dialogue in *Thomas* 24 also makes it clear that this light is within every human person:

- 24.1 His disciples said: “Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary that we seek after it.” He said to them:
- 24.2 Whoever has ears to hear, hear!
- 24.3 There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire world.
- 24.4 If that one does not shine, there is darkness.

The issue, however, is whether one chooses to make this light shine or remain dark. This structure is paralleled in *Thomas* 70:

- 70. Jesus said: “When you birth the one within you, that one will save you. If you do not have that one within you, that one will kill you.”

⁵⁰³ This is physical manifestation is also reflected in *Thomas* 28:

Jesus said: “I took my stand in the midst of the world, and *I was manifested to them in flesh*. I found all of them drunk and none of them thirsting. And my soul throbbed for the sons of men for they are blind in their hearts and do not see. For blind they came into the world empty and seek also to leave the world empty. But right now they are merely drunk. When they sober up, then they will turn.”

The light of the Father in the major redaction is what animates the material image of the Father. If one does not recover or cultivate this 'truer' spiritual principle (i.e. the first image of God) then one will "not shine" (*Thomas* 24.3) but "dwell in poverty" (*Thomas* 3.4, 29.2), "become a corpse" (*Thomas* 60), and be killed (*Thomas* 70). This traumatic side of the discovery is also reflected in the aforementioned saying in *Thomas* 84:

84. Jesus said: "In the days when you would look at your resemblance you rejoiced. When, however, you look upon the images that came into being upon your emergence, which neither die nor manifest themselves, how much you will have to bear!"

While the light remains hidden in *Thomas* 83, in *Thomas* 77.1-2 Jesus declares that *he is the light* and that he permeates the world:

77.1 Jesus said: "I am the light which is above them all, I am (the) all. (The) all has come forth from me, and (the) all has split open before me."
<<77.2 // 30.3 Lift the stone, you will find me there. Split the piece of wood, I am there.>>

Though this saying appears to characterize Jesus as uniquely divine, there are other sayings in *Thomas* that suggest that Jesus was not necessarily exclusive in his divinity, but unique as a guide. It was he that opened up a path back to the first creation -- and it was this path that readers of *Thomas* were to follow. Jesus' experience in *Thomas* 77.1 above is, according to the major redaction, available to everyone, just as his 'sonship' is available to everyone in *Thomas* 3.3. In other words, Jesus' condition is not exclusively his but a possibility open to all; this point is expressed in *Thomas* 67:

67. Jesus said: "Whoever knows (the) all, if he (still) needs (to know) himself, he (still) needs (the) all."

This saying parallels both the 'knowledge of the self' in *Thomas* 3.3 and the 'knowledge of the world' in *Thomas* 80 and 110. In *Thomas* 67 the one who 'knows the all' has discovered 'the

body,' but if that person does not recognize his 'true spiritual nature' within the body, then he has yet to truly 'know the all'; and to 'know the all' implies that one has recognized the image of God within, and thus has also recognized that he is not beholden to the 'material world.' I propose that the 'all,' in the major redaction, should be equated with the 'world' because they are both 'discovered' in the major redaction.

The dialogue complex that the major redactor inserted after *Thomas* 61.1 presents this oscillation between Jesus' uniqueness and the universal accessibility to his experience most eloquently:

61.1 Jesus said: "Two will recline on a couch – one will die, another other will live!"

61.2 Salome said: "Who are you (to say such things) while you recline upon my couch and eat from my table?"

61.3 Jesus said to her: "I derive from the one who is equal (ϰΗϰ). I was (merely) given (by you) that which is my Father's."

61.4 "I am your disciple."

61.5 *Because of this, I say:* "When a person becomes <equal> (< ϰΗϰ >) that person will be full of light.

61.6 *But* if that person becomes divided, that person will be full of darkness."

The initial aphorism was elaborated in such a way by the major redactor that made it a saying spoken against Salome, who was presumably presiding over a meal.⁵⁰⁴ Salome tells Jesus that to talk about the very people he is reclining with in such a manner is both inappropriate and offensive. What concerns our purpose at present, however, is Jesus' statement in *Thomas* 61.2. Jesus claims to derive from the "one who is equal." Because *Thomas* stresses the need to make

⁵⁰⁴ U. Plisch makes a similar point, writing that: "The brusque reaction of Salome in the second sentence indicates the situation presupposed for the dialogue: Jesus is invited to a banquet (cf. Mark 2:13-17 and its parallels); Salome is the host; the lounge is the *clinae* on which, in Antiquity, one lay at the table during the banquet... Salome obviously understood the saying in the first sentence as referring to a situation at a banquet. Perhaps because of the implicit threat, however, she may have seen this as a provocation. Her reaction is a reprimand: You are a guest here; how dare you talk that way!" (U.K. Plisch, *Gospel of Thomas*, 251).

the ‘two one,’ I am inclined to interpret the Coptic ⲙⲏⲙ⁵⁰⁵ ‘equal’ as ‘balanced’ or ‘complete.’ In this sense, the “one who is equal” is the Father whose ‘image’ is *equal* by being both male and female. The rationale in *Thomas* 61.5 parallels the saying in *Thomas* 24.3 -- “There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire world” -- as well as the elaborative questions and answers in *Thomas* 11.2:

11.2 Those who are dead do not live and those who live will not die. In the days you ate what was dead you were making it that which lives. When you come to *dwell in the light*, what will you do? *On the day you were one you became two. But when you become two what will you do?*

Here again we see a connection between the ‘two becoming one’ and ‘life in the (primordial) light (of the Father⁵⁰⁶).’ This connection is what leads me to consider the ‘equality’ appealed to in *Thomas* 61.3 and 61.5 with ‘making the two one’; for in such a condition one lives in the light, which *Thomas* 61.5 reflects. The ‘statement from the opposite’ in *Thomas* 61.6 also parallels the elaborative moves in *Thomas* 24.4 and 3.4.

In the major redaction one must ‘become one’ (ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ) as a solitary (MONOXOC), for that was the original condition in the first creation. This is expressed in the following two redactional sayings:

49. Jesus said: “Blessed are the solitaires (MONOXOC) and chosen (ones), for you will find the kingdom, for are from it and will return there.”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ The actual extant Coptic text uses the word ⲙⲏⲩ, which is normally translated as ‘destroy.’ I agree with U. Plisch, however, that this is a scribal error. The proper original word probably was ⲙⲏⲙ, which can be translated as ‘one’ or ‘equal’ as in the previous sentence in 61.3. (Cf. Plisch, *Gospel of Thomas*, 152).

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. *Thomas* 50.

⁵⁰⁷ According to U. Plisch, “The sentence reads literally, ‘Blessed are the single ones, namely the elect.’ The word ‘namely’ serves as an introduction to the clarification that the solitary ones *are* the elect. Contrary to *Gos. Thom.* 16, where the idea of isolation is seen in a negative light -- as resulting from dissension and separation in the *one* house is a positive feature. Becoming united and separated are two sides of the same issue in the *Gospel of Thomas* (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 4;22;23). The promise that the elect will find the kingdom corresponds to the normal view of the *Gospel of Thomas* as the kingdom being a -- spatially and temporally -- hidden phenomenon (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 3 and 113). (U.K. Plisch, *Gospel of Thomas*, 128).

75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaries (MONOXOC) are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber."⁵⁰⁸

To understand the place of a 'bridal chamber' in Eden, we must again return to a consideration of the geography of Eden. The above sayings seem to suggest that sex had no place in Eden. G. Anderson highlights the paradox of sexuality in the Garden of Eden: "*Adam and Eve were created for the purposes of becoming 'one flesh,' yet the actualization of that purpose seems to be occasioned by human sin.*"⁵⁰⁹ However, in *Thomas*, as in later Syrian theology, the 'becoming one flesh' is a spiritual enterprise, not a physical condition. Anderson also asks:

"How is sex related to sin? One way to frame the matter is that of a simple either/or alternative. If Adam and Eve were celibate in Eden and only after their expulsion knew one another, then sexual knowledge was caused by sin. It made possible the feeling of shame and embarrassment. Part of the task of retrieving our ideal human form would be to renounce sexual desire. On the other hand, if Adam wedded Eve upon meeting her, then marriage is rooted in the very fabric of creation. To renounce marriage would be to reject the very goodness of God's creation."⁵¹⁰

While Anderson may understand that such a renunciation of marriage would equate a renunciation of the "goodness of God's creation," *Thomas* certainly disagrees. The *Gospel of Philip* 62 makes this point with utmost clarity: "A bridal chamber is not for the animals, nor is it for the slaves, nor for defiled women; but it is for free men and virgins." Where, however, is this 'bridal chamber' and what is it doing in an Edenic context? According to St. Ephrem and

⁵⁰⁸ *Thomas* 75 may represent a hermeneutical variation on the Parable of the Lamps in Matthew 25:1-13. It further associates solitariness, aloneness, childlikeness, and genderlessness with virginity. This motif also plays prominently in Syria. For the present purposes it is important to note the association between the 'bridal chamber,' the 'kingdom,' and 'virginity.' C. Hedrick notes that "the Manichaean interpretation of the story of the ten maidens (Matt 25:1-12), the bride is the soul and the bridegroom is Jesus, or alternatively the bride is the church and the bridegroom is Jesus, or alternatively the bride is the church and the bridegroom is the mind (Allberry, *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 154, 1-12). Apparently the purified soul (feminine in Greek) is united with Jesus in the bridal chamber." (C. Hedrick, *Unlocking the Secrets of the Gospel According to Thomas*, 137).

⁵⁰⁹ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 44.

⁵¹⁰ Anderson, G.A., *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 44.

G. Anderson's topography, the Tree of Knowledge represented the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, hence the prohibition of sexual contact. The connection between the bridal chamber and the Holy of Holies is made explicitly in *Gospel of Philip* 64:

There were three buildings specifically for sacrifice in Jerusalem. The one facing the west was called "The Holy." Another, facing south, was called "The Holy of the Holy." The third, facing east, was called "The Holy of the Holies," the place where only the high priest enters. Baptism is "the Holy" building. Redemption is the "Holy of the Holy." "*The Holy of the Holies*" is the *bridal chamber*. Baptism includes the resurrection and the redemption; the redemption (takes place) in the bridal chamber. But the bridal chamber is in that which is superior to [...] you will not find [...] are those who pray [...] Jerusalem who [...] Jerusalem, [...] those called the "Holy of the Holies" [...] the veil was rent, [...] bridal chamber except the image [...] above. Because of this, its veil was rent from top to bottom. For it was fitting for some from below to go upward.

The bridal chamber motif in the *Gospel of Philip* commands a vast array of applications. What is important for the purposes of this chapter, however, is the fact that this interest in the bridal chamber belongs solely in the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*, rather than the preceding strata outlined in chapter three. In this sense, the major redaction introduces the theme of the bridal chamber. According to *Thomas* 49 and 75 the bridal chamber is both the Kingdom and the place where the male and female *become one*. This, again, is elaborated in the *Gospel of Philip*:

Philip 97: No one can know when the husband and the wife have intercourse with one another, except the two of them. Indeed, marriage in the world is a mystery for those who have taken a wife. If there is a hidden quality to the marriage of defilement, how much more is the undefiled marriage a true mystery! It is not fleshly, but pure. It belongs not to desire, but to the will. It belongs not to the darkness or the night, but to the day and the light. If a marriage is open to the public, it has become prostitution, and the bride plays the harlot not only when she is impregnated by another man, but even if she slips out of her bedroom and is seen. Let her show herself only to her father and her mother, and to the friend of the bridegroom and the sons of the bridegroom. These are permitted to enter every day into the bridal chamber. But let the others yearn just to listen to her voice and to enjoy her ointment, and let them feed from the crumbs that fall from the table, like the dogs.

Bridegrooms and brides belong to the bridal chamber. No one shall be able to see the bridegroom with the bride unless he become such a one.

The *Gospel of Philip* offers a much more visceral and earthy interpretation of the bridal chamber motif. In *Philip* the bridal chamber motif plays on a literal interpretation of a bridal chamber in antiquity. In this sense, the bridal chamber has to do with actual physical intercourse, yet the interpretive hermeneutic moves this literal interpretation towards the metaphorical by comparing it to an 'undefiled spiritual marriage,' the 'true mystery.' The association of marriage in this world with prostitution and harlotry recalls the saying in *Thomas* 105 from the major redaction: "Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!" In *Philip* the reader is to overcome the material world by moving beyond physical procreation toward spiritual procreation. Ironically, this spiritual bridal chamber still does produce children; consider *Philip* 73:

In this world, the slaves serve the free. In the Kingdom of Heaven, the free will minister to the slaves: the children of the bridal chamber will minister to the children of the marriage. The children of the bridal chamber have just one name: rest. Altogether, they need take no other form, because they have contemplation, [...]. They are numerous [...] in the things [...] the glories [...].

This saying above also recalls the Greek fragment of *Thomas* 2.2, which declares that the reader will *rest* after ruling. Moreover, there is a connection between the bridal chamber, rest, being a child in creation (*Thomas* 50), and creation itself, all of which play prominently in the major redaction of *Thomas*:

Philip 69: Indeed, one must utter a mystery. The Father of everything united with the virgin who came down, and a fire shone for him on that day. He appeared in the great bridal chamber. Therefore his body came into being on that very day. It left the bridal chamber as one who came into being from the bridegroom and the bride. So Jesus established everything in it through these. It is fitting for each of the disciples to *enter into his rest*.⁵¹¹

⁵¹¹ Emphasis mine.

This “virgin who came down” which a “fire shone for him on that day” is presumably the Spirit of God that hovered over the waters in Genesis 1 and the “day” mentioned is probably the first day of creation when light emerged from chaos, and “a fire shone for him.” This joining of the Spirit of God with God the Father was ‘expelled’ or ‘birthed’ *as* Creation (which parallels the Syrian Quqite myth detailed in chapter one). Because of this, a ‘body’ came forth. Thus the bridal chamber, in this saying, is the place that the Spirit of God commingled with God the Father to beget Jesus *and Adam*:

Philip 70: Adam came into being from two virgins, from the Spirit and from the virgin earth. Christ therefore, was born from a virgin to rectify the Fall which occurred in the beginning.

The contrast between *Philip 69* and *70* presents a rather untidy juxtaposition. In *Philip 69* Jesus is produced, but in *Philip 70* Adam is produced *as a problem*. Adam, in *Philip 70*, is produced by two virginal properties: the Spirit of God and the earth. However, Jesus, in *Philip 69*, is produced of a different virginal pair: the Spirit of God and God the Father. Both of these sayings recall the dialogue in *Thomas 50*, from the major redaction:

50.1 Jesus said: “If they say to you, ‘Where have you come from?’
 50.2 Say to them, ‘We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image.’ If they say to you, ‘Is it you?’ say ‘We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living Father.’
 50.3 If they ask you, ‘What is the sign of your Father in you?’ say, ‘It is movement and repose.’”

Both *Philip 70* and *Thomas 50* end in repose, but begin with the ‘movement’ of the Father in creation. The juxtaposition of *Philip 69* and *70* demonstrates M. Turner’s thesis that the collector of the *Gospel of Philip* intentionally sequenced sayings that disagreed with each other

in order to produce new meanings and syntheses.⁵¹² That this 'fire' mentioned in *Thomas* 69 is to be equated with the light that came into existence at Creation is evinced in *Philip* 52:

It is from water and fire that the soul and the spirit came into being. It is from water and fire and light that the son of the bridal chamber (came into being). The fire is the chrism, the light is the fire. I am not referring to that fire which has no form, but to the other fire whose form is white, which is bright and beautiful, and which gives beauty.

The juxtaposition of 'fire' and 'spirit' also recalls a piece from the *Dialogue of the Savior*:

Judas said, "Tell us, Lord, what was [...] before the heaven and the earth existed."
The Lord said, "There was darkness and water, and spirit upon water. And I say to you [...] what you seek after [...] inquire after [...] within you [...] the power and the mystery [...] spirit, for from [...] wickedness [...] come [...] mind [...] behold [...] [...]."

Philip, however, moves this thematic correlation into the realm of the sacramental with the term 'chrism.' Moreover, the mentioning of 'putting on a bright and white garment' suggests a possible association with the sacrament of baptism.⁵¹³

What is most novel about the 'bridal chamber' motif in this early Syrian tradition is that it unites humanity's experience with God's own experience of His 'emergence' as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As stated above, according to the *Gospel of Philip* the Son (i.e. Jesus) is produced from the joining of the Father with the Spirit in Creation (*Philip* 69: "The Father of everything united with the virgin who came down... Therefore his body came into being on that very day. It left the bridal chamber as one who came into being from the bridegroom and the bride"). In this sense a 'spiritual intercourse' produces divine things in the divine bridal chamber. Consider this development in *Philip* 91:

⁵¹² Turner, M. L., *The Gospel According to Philip: The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 258.

⁵¹³ Cf. H. Koester and E. Pagels' Introduction to S. Emmel's translation of the *Dialogue of the Savior* in S. Emmels, Ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984).

The human being has intercourse with the human being. The horse has intercourse with the horse, the ass with the ass. Members of a race usually have associated with those of like race. So spirit mingles with spirit, and thought consorts with thought, and light shares with light. If you are born a human being, it is the human being who will love you. If you become a spirit, it is the spirit which will be joined to you. If you become thought, it is thought which will mingle with you. If you become light, it is the light which will share with you. *If you become one of those who belong above, it is those who belong above who will rest upon you.* If you become horse or ass or bull or dog or sheep, or another of the animals which are outside or below, then neither human being nor spirit nor thought nor light will be able to love you. Neither those who belong above nor those who belong within will be able to rest in you, and you have no part in them.

One must, then, become a spirit in order to join with the Spirit. One must become like “*one of those who belong above*,”⁵¹⁴ that is, one must surmount the world. This divine ‘intercourse,’ if it can be called such, has produced god from god, and in *Philip* 91, light from light. It is this seed, according to *Philip* 83, that the sons of the bridal chamber inherit:

A horse sires a horse, a man begets man, a god brings forth a god. Compare the bridegroom and the bride. They have come from the [...]. No Jew [...] has existed. And [...] from the Jews. [...] Christians [...] these [...] are referred to as “The chosen people of [...],” and “The true man” and “Son of Man” and “the seed of the Son of Man.” This true race is renowned in the world [...] that the sons of the bridal chamber dwell.

The above examples from the *Gospel of Philip* serve to demonstrate that the major redaction is not unique in its interpretation of the Kingdom as the Genesis 1 condition. Nor is it novel in its association of the bridal chamber with the place where male and female ‘become one.’ In both of these cases the major redaction of *Thomas* fits comfortably into the early Syrian Christian context. These parallels between the *Gospel of Philip* and the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* demonstrate a shared interest in the motifs associated with the Genesis 1-3 narrative. What is most important for this dissertation, however, is that the material that the *Gospel of Philip* has most in common with the *Gospel of Thomas* relates almost exclusively to the

⁵¹⁴ *Philip* 47. Emphasis mine.

material in the major redaction. This further supports both my delineation of the major redaction and the proposal that the major redaction is posterior to the rest of the material operating in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The Thomasine Trajectory

Though the Genesis 1-3 narrative represents the primary context for the major redaction there exist a number of additional sayings that are associated with the character of Thomas. These sayings, I believe, are responsible for inaugurating the Thomasine trajectory in Syria, which will span the first four centuries of Christian history in Syria. In this section of the chapter, I intend to show how the later Thomasine texts (the *Book of Thomas* and the *Acts of Thomas*) continue to develop the themes and motifs of the major redaction. If this can be demonstrated persuasively, then we will have succeeded in establishing the major redaction as the latest tradition to be inserted into the initial chreia collection detailed in the Appendix. The 'Thomas sayings' are listed as follows:

Thomas Incipit. These are the veiled sayings which the living Jesus spoke and Judas Didymos Thomas wrote them down.

Thomas 13.1 Jesus said to his disciples: "Compare and tell me whom I resemble."

Simon Peter said to him: "You are like a righteous angel."

Matthew said to him: "You are like a wise philosopher."

Thomas said to him: "Teacher, my mouth will not permit me to say whom you resemble."

Jesus said: "I am not your teacher – you are drunk. Because you drank from the bubbling spring that I have measured out."

Thomas 13.2 And he took him and departed. He told him three sayings.

When Thomas came back to his companions they asked him: "What did Jesus say to you?"

Thomas said to them: "If I told you the sayings he told me, you would take up stones and cast them at me. And fire would burst out of those stones and burn you."

Thomas 28. Jesus said: "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and I was manifested to them in flesh. I found all of them drunk and none of them thirsting. And my soul throbbed for the sons of men for they are blind in their hearts and do not see. For blind they came into the world empty and seek also to leave the world empty. But right now they are merely drunk. When they sober up, then they will turn."

Thomas 108. Jesus said: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person."

The above sayings traditions present what appears to be a miniature *Gospel of Thomas*. In the Genesis 1-3 material outlined in the previous portions of this chapter, Thomas did not enter the tradition. This may suggest, however, that the Thomas material represents its own redaction.

H. Peuch was one of the first to propose that the Didymos Judas Thomas of the *Gospel of Thomas* incipit was to be connected with the Judas Thomas of the later *Acts of Thomas*.⁵¹⁵ One can also connect this apostolic figure to the Judas Thomas in the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. The P.Oxy. 654.1-5 Greek fragment refers to one [Ἰούδα ὁ] καὶ Θωμᾶ, where the Coptic version extends this name to include the term ἈΔΥΜΟC, which transliterates the Greek word for 'twin,' δίδυμος. A. DeConick proposes that "What these traditions suggest is that in addition to Judas Iscariot, there was a disciple of Jesus whose actual name was 'Judas.' At some point in time, perhaps to differentiate him from Judas Iscariot, Judas received the nickname 'the Twin': the Aramaic ܐܬܬܝܢ ('twin' has been transliterated into Greek letters as Θωμᾶ(ς))."⁵¹⁶ In the *Gospel of Thomas* incipit the apostle referred to as Judas

⁵¹⁵ Peuch, H., "The Gospel of Thomas," in: E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testaments Apocrypha*, I (R. Wilsdon, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 278-307.

⁵¹⁶ DeConick, A.D., *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 44.

Didymos Thomas, which over emphasizes Thomas' 'twinship'; thus, Judas is the 'twin twin,' that is, '*really the twin*' of Jesus.

The incipit saying of the *Gospel of Thomas* serves to mark the genre of the text as a whole: "These are the veiled sayings which the living Jesus spoke and Judas Didymos Thomas wrote them down." However, what genre is actually marked is difficult to determine.

Two other sayings complexes associate Jesus' words with his character:

43.1 His disciples said to him: "Who are you to say these things to us?"

43.2 "You do not realize who I am from what I say to you? Rather, you have become like the Judeans: they love the tree, but hate its fruit – and love its fruit, but hate the tree."

91.1 They said to him: "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you."

91.2 "But, that which you asked me about in those days I did not tell you, but I now desire to tell you, but you no longer seek (to know)."

The first question in *Thomas* 43.1 questions Jesus' authority to speak such scandalous and profound things. U. Plisch notes that the "question itself seems rather rough coming from Jesus' first and closest followers."⁵¹⁷ This negative tenor of the question is evinced in Jesus' response, which compares the disciples to Judeans (or: Jews) who can't make up their mind -- "they love the tree, but hate its fruit – and love its fruit, but hate the tree." Jesus, however, does not answer their question, he simply turns the question against the disciples. In *Thomas* 91.1 we have a more specific question (perhaps from the disciples) concerning Jesus' unique status as a divine figure or messenger. The Johannine tradition would probably respond to the question in *Thomas* 43.1 with an emphasis on Jesus' relationship to the Father and his origin before the world.⁵¹⁸ In the *Gospel of John*, Jesus has the authority to say what he says because he is divine. In *Thomas*, Jesus merely declares that they should know who he is if they are

⁵¹⁷ Plisch, U.K., *Gospel of Thomas*, 43.

⁵¹⁸ E.g., John 17.

listening to his sayings. For *Thomas*, Jesus is trying to tell the disciples things as a teacher of wisdom. In *John*, Jesus is the message. Jesus, in *John*, declares that he is “the way, and the truth, and the life” and that “no one comes to the Father” except through him.⁵¹⁹ It is not that *Thomas* rejects Jesus’ divinity (e.g., *Thomas* 77), it simply is not part of the overall concern of the major redactor.

In the Appendix I made the case that the earliest stratum of the *Thomas* tradition was a ‘chreia collection.’ I think it is helpful to compare *Thomas*’ ‘chreia collection genre’ to that of the ‘ancient instruction genre’ outlined by J. Kloppenborg and the *logoi sophon* genre introduced by J. Robinson. However, before engaging with these two genres, I want to point out that I think *Thomas* fits more comfortably within the chreia collection genre than the instruction genre because of the emphasis on the fact that Jesus *said these sayings* (i.e. “Jesus said...”), as opposed to someone else. According to Theon of Alexandria, as outlined in the Appendix, the most important aspect of the chreia is that it is attributed to a specific person. This does not appear to be the overall emphasis in *Q*. Whatever the case, it seems clear to me that the chreia collection genre is very closely related to the instruction genre.

According to Kloppenborg’s analysis of the strata in *Q*, the genre of instruction stands as the formative stratum.⁵²⁰ Yet, like other ancient instructions, *Q* moves in the direction of divine wisdom, rather than mere mundane wisdom.⁵²¹ Jesus, in *Q*, takes on the persona of

⁵¹⁹ John 14:6-7

⁵²⁰ Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q*, 317.

⁵²¹ Kloppenborg writes, “This association of Jesus as the speaker of the wise sayings, with a heavenly source such as God or Sophia, is quite intelligible in the context of the instructional genre. Similar associations were observed in Prov 1-9, Sirach, Shube-awilum and many of the Egyptian instructions.” Kloppenborg, J.S., *The Formation of Q*, 319.

Wisdom (Sophia) announcing the consummation of the age and the eschatological harvest.⁵²²

Kloppenborg notes:

The strong potential -- though not an ineluctable pressure -- of the genre to associate the speaker of the wise words with the Divine makes intelligible the developments such as are visible in *Gos. Thom. 1*, which represents Jesus as a divine or semi-divine mediator of secret revelation. But developments within Q itself may also be explained on this basis: in the first major redaction and supplementation of the Q sapiential speeches, further indications of the functional unity of Jesus with Sophia are introduced. Q 7:35 represents Jesus and John as Sophia's children; 11:49-51a places an oracle of Sophia in Jesus' mouth and then (11:51b) has Jesus resume the oracle in his own words; 13:34-35 appears to be another Sophia saying and most dramatically, 10:22 draws on the mythologoumena of Sophia for its description of the relation of the Father to the Son. In other words, the development seen at the second (polemical) stage of Q's literary development is an extension of the potentialities which were at work already at the first (sapiential) stage.⁵²³

Kloppenborg identifies a natural -- though not universal -- potential within the instruction genre to expand into the divine. In this sense, wise words become the wise words of a divine figure. Or, if I may push his observation further, the message of wisdom is overshadowed by the messenger of wisdom; that is, it is not what is proclaimed that is most important, but *who it is* that proclaims. Wisdom collections almost inevitably, if given enough time and usage, acquire a semi-divine aura. Wisdom, then, becomes a *participatory entity*: though of human origin, Wisdom *participates* in the divine -- and vice versa. This is a nearly universal phenomenon; consider Robinson's remarks on this front:

When one inquires behind Jewish wisdom literature, one finds similar collections in Egypt and Mesopotamia. In Egypt the common incipit of such collections of sayings is "Beginning of the instruction." Hence the expression "Sayings of the Sages" at the opening of the sayings collection in Prov. 22:17-24:22, a source that has been shown to go back to the book of wisdom of Amen-em-Opet, cannot itself be attributed to an Egyptian *Vorlage*. Perhaps an antecedent for the title can more clearly be found in Mesopotamia. For the

⁵²² Q 10:2-16.

⁵²³ Kloppenborg, J.S., *The Formation of Q*, 319-320.

Ahikar collection, from which Prov. 23:13-14 seems to have been borrowed may have been designated as “sayings.” To be sure, the Ethiopian fragments, preserved in the “Book of the Wise Philosophers,” reflect Egyptian usage in the superscription “Instruction of Ahikar the Sage.” But Ahikar’s collection of sayings in the Syrian version A beings by calling upon his son Nadan to regard Ahikar’s “sayings” *as he would God’s words*.⁵²⁴

It is the last phrase in Robinson’s presentation that captures this tendency toward *participatory divinization* inherent within the instruction and wisdom genre. Surely Ahikar’s wisdom and instructions were of human origin, but by *participation* in divine Wisdom they become “*God’s words*.” And it is this phenomenon, this tendency, that both the Johannine and Thomasine communities are engaging with. In John, Sophia is presented as the *Logos incarnate*, but, in *Thomas*, Sophia is *incarnated* in Jesus’ *words*. The two, however, are not all that different when one considers 1 Clement, quoted here by Robinson:

If the *Gospel of Thomas* shows the way in which the Sophia tradition used in Q ends in Gnosticism, an early Catholic theologian attests equally clearly its origin in Jewish wisdom literature. “The All-virtuous Wisdom said thus: ‘Behold I will bring forth to you the expression of my spirit, and I will teach you my *logos*, since I called and you did not obey, and I put forth *logoi* and you did not attend ... For it shall come to pass when you call upon me, I will not hear you. The evil shall seek me and they shall not find me. For they hated wisdom ...’” (1 Clem. 57.3 ff.).⁵²⁵

Though Robinson’s introduction of the *Logoi Sophon* was pioneering, it too easily equated the *Gospel of Thomas* with ‘gnosticism.’⁵²⁶ There is nothing ‘gnostic’ about *Thomas*, in comparison to other Christian literature; there is no mention of the ‘fall of Sophia,’ ‘Barbelo,’ ‘the false

⁵²⁴ Robinson, J. M., “LOGOI SOPHON: On the Gattung of Q” in James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories Through Early Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1971), 110. Emphasis mine.

⁵²⁵ Robinson, J.M., “LOGOI SOPHON,” 104.

⁵²⁶ See chapter one and King, Karen L., *What is Gnosticism?* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005); Williams, Michael Allen, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

creator god,' etc. Sophia, in Clement's quotation, proclaims, "I will put forth *logoi* (i.e., sayings)..." and this is precisely where *Thomas* begins.

The Thomasine sayings listed above, when carefully aligned, present a coherent narrative (or perhaps argument)⁵²⁷:

⁵²⁷ While I organize the Thomas material according to Hermogenes' chreia elaborative method, I do not intend to suggest that this is how the sayings were originally sequenced. I use this sequence as an aid to show the thematic continuity within these sayings.

Chreia

Thomas 28. Jesus said: "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and I was manifested to them in flesh. I found all of them drunk and none of them thirsting. And my soul throbbed for the sons of men for they are blind in their hearts and do not see. For blind they came into the world empty and seek also to leave the world empty. But right now they are merely drunk. When they sober up, then they will turn."

Analogy

Thomas 13.1 Jesus said to his disciples: "Compare and tell me whom I resemble."
Simon Peter said to him: "You are like a righteous angel."
Matthew said to him: "You are like a wise philosopher."
Thomas said to him: "Teacher, my mouth will not permit me to say whom you resemble."
Jesus said: "I am not your teacher – you are drunk. Because you drank from the bubbling spring that I have measured out."

Example

Thomas 13.2 And he took him and departed. He told him three sayings.
When Thomas came back to his companions they asked him: "What did Jesus say to you?"
Thomas said to them: "If I told you the sayings he told me, you would take up stones and cast them at me. And fire would burst out of those stones and burn you."

Conclusion

Thomas 108. Jesus said: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person."

Odes of Solomon, 11:6-7

And speaking waters touched
my lips
From the fountain of the Lord
generously.
And so I drank and became
intoxicated,
From the living water that does
not die.

Acts of Thomas 47

Jesus, the Hidden Mystery that
is revealed to us. You are the
one who has revealed many
mysteries to us. You called me
apart from all my fellows and
told me three words with which
I am enflamed, and I am unable
to speak them to others.

Gos. Thomas Incipit

These are the veiled sayings
which the living Jesus spoke
and Judas Didymos Thomas
wrote them down.

Bk. Thomas Incipit

The secret words that the
savior spoke to Judas Thomas
which I, even I, Mathaias,
wrote down, while I was
walking, listening to them
speak with one another.

In my hypothetical sequence above, we can see a thematic coherence that permeates these Thomasine sayings. The initial saying in *Thomas* 28 represents what could be considered the Thomasine version of the Johannine prologue. Jesus, as in John 1:1, ‘tabernacles’ or is ‘made manifest’ in the world. This celestial derivation suggests that this Jesus is being associated with the Wisdom of God (Sophia) who was the first of God’s works in creation in Proverbs 8:22-24. This echoes, then, the divinizing tendency associated with wisdom and instruction collections outlined by J. Kloppenborg and J. Robinson. U. Plisch notes that “Only the clause ‘and I appeared to them in flesh’ indicates that we have to do here with a saying of Jesus...”⁵²⁸ According to U. Plisch, the proverbial material that follows “is also conceivable as a word of wisdom from the mouth of Sophia, secondarily put in the mouth of Jesus.”⁵²⁹

In *Thomas* 28 ‘drunkenness’ is associated with ignorance; this is also the case in *Thomas* 13.1. In *Thomas* 13.1 Thomas tries to outdo his companions by declaring that Jesus is to be associated with the ineffable. One would expect Jesus to congratulate Thomas for recognizing his true character and essence; this is what happens in the parallel narrative in Mark 8:27-30:

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that I am?’ And they answered him, ‘John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.’ He asked them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered him, ‘You are the Messiah.’ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.⁵³⁰

In *Thomas* 13.1, Jesus tells Thomas that he is merely drunk. The sage-like observations and aphorisms that Jesus speaks, *when interpreted as divine words*, inevitably lead listeners to attribute divine status to the speaker, rather than to the observations. This is precisely what this

⁵²⁸ Plisch, U.K., *Gospel of Thomas*, 95.

⁵²⁹ Plisch, U.K., *Gospel of Thomas*, 95.

⁵³⁰ See also the parallels in Matt 16:13-20; Lk 9:18-21a..

dialogue in *Thomas* 13.1 is attempting to challenge. Jesus tells Thomas explicitly that he *is not his teacher*. Yet, Jesus acts as a teacher in the cluster that follows in *Thomas* 13.2. Within the context of *Thomas* 28, Jesus is not himself the ineffable -- but a representative of the ineffable. In other words, it is Jesus' *words* rather than his personage that are divine. However, this is not to be pushed in the opposite direction: this doesn't mean that Jesus is not considered divine, only that it is not the point of emphasis. In the major redaction, and these Thomasine sayings in particular, it is Jesus *words* that are most important. In John 6:53-58 the disciples are called to eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood -- otherwise they will have no life in them:

So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

Thomas 108 offers a position that is not too dissimilar to this: Jesus said: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person." Here the disciple drinks from Jesus' mouth. In this sense the disciple learns from Jesus' sayings, which proceed from his mouth. Unlike the Johannine tradition, in *Thomas*, the disciple does not *eat* Jesus per se, but acquires his sayings as a way of life. These teachings, however, are immensely potent, as is indicated by their intoxicating quality. In *Thomas* 28 and 13.1 Jesus' sayings make people do 'stupid' things, but in *Thomas* 108 they lead to uncovering what is hidden and becoming like Jesus. This saying in *Thomas* 108 represents the beginning of the specifically Thomasine christology, which concerns being a twin of Jesus. The successful initiate, as Thomas was in the *Acts of Thomas*, was to become so much like Jesus that he or she would be confused for him: "You [Thomas] seem very much

like him / as if you were his offspring.”⁵³¹ In the Thomasine tradition one was to become a twin of Jesus -- this was the pinnacle of the tradition. Because the sayings of Jesus are what ‘lead to life’ it is Thomas that *writes them down*: “These are the veiled sayings which the living Jesus spoke and Judas Didymos Thomas wrote them down” -- and thus, Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings will not taste death.”

Acts of Thomas 47: Jesus, the Hidden Mystery that is revealed to us. You are the one who has revealed many mysteries to us. You called me apart from all my fellows and told me three words with which I am enflamed, and I am unable to speak them to others.⁵³²

Odes of Solomon 11:6-7
And speaking waters touched my lips
From the fountain of the Lord generously.
And so I drank and became intoxicated,
From the living water that does not die.⁵³³

The Major Redaction and the Later Thomasine Trajectory

Our story does not end with the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*; it only begins here. As was stated at the outset of this chapter, I intend to show that these later Thomasine texts exhibit the influence of the major redactional material rather than the material from the early strata. However, there is an important distinction to made. In what follows I am searching not for mere verbal parallels, but evidence of shared themes. The first text that we will turn to in this section is the *Book of Thomas the Contender*.

The *Book of Thomas*, like the *Gospel of Thomas* before it, begins with a description of its genre: 138.1-4. “The secret words that the savior spoke to Judas Thomas which I, even I, Mathaiias, wrote down, while I was walking, listening to them speak with one another.” The

⁵³¹ *Acts of Thomas*, 45.7.

⁵³² *Acts of Thomas* 47, quoted in DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 86.

⁵³³ *Odes of Solomon*, 11.6-7, quoted in DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 86.

problem posed by this Mathaias is that the name carries a number of variants in the early Christian world, and may thus apply to either one character or a number of different characters. We have record of a certain Mathaias who was the recipient of 'secret' words of Jesus:

The *Elenchos* of Hippolytus, *Refutations* VII 20.1

Basilides and Isidore, the true son and disciple of Isidore, say that Matthias spoke to them secret words which he heard from the Savior when he was taught privately.

Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III. 4, 26.3

They say that Matthias also taught as follows: 'To strive with the flesh and abuse it without yielding to it in any way for unbound lust, but to increase the soul through faith and knowledge.'

Clement of Alexandria's tradition characterizes the *Book of Thomas* very well -- indeed, so well that I find it difficult not to recognize this text as the *Book of Thomas*. J. Turner, the author of the only book-length study on this text,⁵³⁴ organizes the diverse Matthews possibly associated with the *Book of Thomas* as follows:

In spite of the orthographical variants, it is possible that Mathaias, Matthaïos, Matthias may together point to a certain individual to whom tradition ascribed the role of recipient and traditioner of words (λόγοι, λόγια) of Jesus. He is clearly connected by Papias with a tradition of λόγια, and by Hippolytus with a tradition of λόγοι ἀπόκρυφτοι, while the *incipit* of *Thomas Contender* designates him as privy to and scribe of these words spoken, not totally privately but in the company of Thomas. Clement credits him with being an ascetic teacher, as does the *incipit* of *Thomas the Contender* by implication, Papias. Therefore, if the name Mathaias entered the *incipit* of *Thomas the Contender* by being borrowed from the title of section B [the dialogue stratum] of *Thomas the Contender*, it is reasonable to suppose that section B forms a portion of the stream of traditions about a certain Matthew who was a recipient of the Savior's secret words. The variation in the orthography of Matthew's name would then have arisen through attempts to harmonize this Matthew's name with the names of other Matthews, e.g. the tax-collector, or Iscariot's replacement, etc.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ Turner, J.D., *The Book of Thomas the Contender from Codex II of the Cairo Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi (CG II, 7): The Coptic Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Missoula, MT: Scholar's Press, 1975).

⁵³⁵ Turner, J., *The Book of Thomas the Contender*, 111.

What concerns my project in this chapter is the relationship between the *Book of Thomas* and the recovered major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*, not the *Book of Thomas'* composition. What follows is a brief illustration of the influence of the major redaction of *Thomas* on the *Book of Thomas*. It would not be an understatement to consider the first half of the *Book of Thomas* as a *commentary* on the *Gospel of Thomas*. Again, let me be clear about the task ahead: this dissertation does not permit a detailed analysis of these texts, so I will focus on illustrating is the *thematic influence* of major redactional material on the *Book of Thomas*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, and the *Acts of Thomas*.

The Book of Thomas and the Major Redaction of the Gospel of Thomas

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Book of Thomas the Contender</i> 138.1-145.25
These are the veiled sayings which the living Jesus spoke and Judas Didymos Thomas wrote them down.	The secret words that the savior spoke to Judas Thomas which I, even I, Mathaias, wrote down, while I was walking, listening to them speak with one another.
91.2 "But, that which you asked me about in those days I did not tell you, but I now desire to tell you, but you no longer seek (to know)."	The savior said, "Brother Thomas while you have time in the world, listen to me, and I will reveal to you the things you have pondered in your mind.

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Book of Thomas the Contender</i> <i>138.1-145.23</i>
3.3 When you come to know yourselves then you will be known, and you will realize that you are the sons of the Living Father.	<p>"Now, since it has been said that you are my twin and true companion, examine yourself, and learn who you are, in what way you exist, and how you will come to be. Since you will be called my brother, it is not fitting that you be ignorant of yourself. And I know that you have understood, because you had already understood that I am the knowledge of the truth. So while you accompany me, although you are uncomprehending, you have (in fact) already come to know, and you will be called 'the one who knows himself'.</p> <p>"Therefore it is necessary for us to speak to you, since this is the doctrine of the perfect. If, now, you desire to become perfect, you shall observe these things; if not, your name is 'Ignorant', since it is impossible for an intelligent man to dwell with a fool, for the intelligent man is perfect in all wisdom.</p>
3.4 If, however, you do not come to know yourselves then you dwell in poverty and you are the poverty.	For he who has not known himself has known nothing,
2.2 And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed, and he will rule-as-a-king over (the) all.	but he who has known himself has at the same time already achieved knowledge about the depth of the all.
67. Jesus said: "Whoever knows (the) all, if he (still) needs (to know) himself, he (still) needs (the) all."	And the savior answered, saying, "Blessed is the wise man who sought after the truth, and when he found it, he rested upon it forever and was unafraid of those who wanted to disturb him."
	So then, you, my brother Thomas, have beheld what is obscure to men, that is, what they ignorantly stumble against."

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Book of Thomas the Contender</i> <i>138.1-145.23</i>
<p>5.1 Jesus said: "Recognize what is right in front of your face, and what is hidden will be revealed to you."</p> <p>5.2 For, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.</p>	<p>Now Thomas said to the lord, "Therefore I beg you to tell me what I ask you before your ascension, and when I hear from you about the hidden things, then I can speak about them. And it is obvious to me that the truth is difficult to perform before men."</p> <p>Now Thomas answered and said to the savior, "Tell us about these things that you say are not visible, but are hidden from us."</p>
<p>60. <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea. He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb." They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat it." He said to them: "While it is living he will not eat it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (and then he can eat it)." They said to him: "There is no other way." He said to them: "You also, seek after a place of repose, lest you become corpses and get consumed."</p> <p>87. Jesus said: "Damn the body that depends on a body; and damn to the soul that depends on these two."</p> <p>112. Jesus said: "Damn the flesh that depends on the soul, and damn the soul that depends on the flesh."</p>	<p>The savior said, "All bodies [...] the beasts are begotten [...] it is evident like [...] this, too, those that are above [...] things that are visible, but they are visible in their own root, and it is their fruit that nourishes them. But these visible bodies survive by devouring creatures similar to them with the result that the bodies change. Now that which changes will decay and perish, and has no hope of life from then on, since that body is bestial. So just as the body of the beasts perishes, so also will these formations perish. Do they not derive from intercourse like that of the beasts? If it, too derives from intercourse, how will it beget anything different from beasts?"</p> <p>So, therefore, you are babes until you become perfect."</p> <p>Only a little while longer, and that which is visible will dissolve; then shapeless shades will emerge, and in the midst of tombs they will forever dwell upon the corpses in pain and corruption of soul."</p>
<p>77.1 Jesus said: "I am the light which is above them all, I am (the) all. (The) all has come forth from me, and (the) all has split open before me."</p>	<p>9. The savior said, "O blessed Thomas, of course this visible light shines on your behalf - not in order that you remain here, but rather that you might come forth</p>

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Book of Thomas the Contender</i> <i>138.1-145.23</i>
<p>50.1 Jesus said: "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' Say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image.'</p> <p>50.2 If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living Father.'</p> <p>50.3 If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say, 'It is movement and repose.'"</p>	<p>and whenever all the elect abandon bestiality, then this light will withdraw up to its essence, and its essence will welcome it, since it is a good servant.</p>
<p>22.3 Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when you make the male and the female into a solitary one, so that the male is not male nor the female female. And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]."</p>	<p>Then the savior continued and said, "O unsearchable love of the light! O bitterness of the fire that blazes in the bodies of men and in their marrow, kindling in them night and day, and burning the limbs of men and making their minds become drunk and their souls become deranged [...] them within males and females [...] night and moving them, [...] secretly and visibly. For the males move [...] upon the females and the females upon the males. Therefore it is said, "Everyone who seeks the truth from true wisdom will make himself wings so as to fly, fleeing the lust that scorches the spirits of men." And he will make himself wings to flee every visible spirit."</p>
<p>105: "Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!"</p>	<p>Thomas answered and said, "What have we to say in the face of these things? What shall we say to blind men? What doctrine should we express to these miserable mortals who say, "We came to do good and not curse," and yet claim, "Had we not been begotten in the flesh, we would not have known iniquity"?"</p>
	<p>The savior said, "Truly, as for those, do not esteem them as men, but regard them as beasts, for just as beasts devour one another, so also men of this sort devour one another.</p>

In the material charted above it is clear that the *Book of Thomas* has been primarily influenced by the themes associated with the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. The character of Thomas, in the *Book of Thomas*, shows what a successful reader of the *Gospel of Thomas* would become: a 'twin' and a 'perfect' one. In the *Book of Thomas* the Thomas character becomes what was merely gestured at in *Thomas* 3.3. Moreover, he has accomplished the rule put forward in *Thomas* 108 -- "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person" -- as is indicated by his understanding of that which was once hidden. In the *Book of Thomas* the Thomas character becomes Jesus' closest disciple -- so much so that he takes on the title of 'twin of Jesus.' There are also a number of important developments in the Thomas tradition represented above which I will list here:

- 1) The introduction of Mathaias probably indicates an acknowledgement that the *Book of Thomas* is posterior to the *Gospel of Thomas* within the Thomas trajectory.
- 2) The *Book of Thomas* attempts to demonstrate the implications of the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* by producing an exemplar of these sayings: the Apostle Thomas. The Thomas character is the one 'who is known as the one who knows himself.'
- 3) The *Gospel of Thomas* sayings against the 'world' and the 'body' are intensified in the *Book of Thomas*. In the *Book of Thomas* there is no question that the author of the dialogue section and the final compiler⁵³⁶ were encouraging a rather severe form of asceticism.

⁵³⁶ See chapter one for a discussion of these two traditions operating in the *Book of Thomas*.

- 4) The association of sexual contact with 'animal behavior' is also amplified considerably in the *Book of Thomas*. Women are now perceived as impediments to spiritual formation in the *Book of Thomas*.
- 5) Virginity is made an explicit rule in the *Book of Thomas*, whereas in the *Gospel of Thomas* it is merely implied.
- 6) Vegetarianism is required in the *Book of Thomas*.
- 7) While the resurrection remains a present tense phenomenon, an apocalyptic expectation has been introduced in the *Book of Thomas*.

The Dialogue of the Savior and the Major Redaction of the Gospel of Thomas

E. Pagels and H. Koester were the first to recognize a number of parallels between the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Savior*, particularly within the 'dialogue' sections:

These sections constitute the major source for the present work and account for about 65% of its text. In its composition the dialogue features brief questions or statements of one of the individually named disciples (sometimes also of all the disciples) and usually brief answers of the Lord. Several units comprise only one question and one answer, thus resembling many of the "sayings" of *The Gospel of Thomas*. In other instances, several questions and answers form a coherent unit discussing a particular topic. The final answer may appear at the end in the form of a traditional saying, but sayings are also used in an initial statement of the Lord, which is then elaborated in the subsequent discussion, or in a question of a disciple. Parallels to such sayings are found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, occasionally in John, and in most frequently in *The Gospel of Thomas*.⁵⁵⁷

While I am not sure whether the *Dialogue of the Savior* should be considered a 'Thomasine' text, I do believe that the *Gospel of Thomas* has influenced the text. I will chart some of these thematic parallels between *Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Savior* below:

⁵⁵⁷ From the introduction to S. Emmel's translation of *The Dialogue of the Savior* Koester, 2.

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Dialogue of the Savior</i>
2.2 And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed, and he will rule-as-a-king, <i>and when he rules he will rest.</i>	1. The Savior said to his disciples, "Already the time has come, brothers, for us to abandon our labor [or: suffering] and <i>stand at rest. For whoever stands at rest will rest forever.</i>
49. Jesus said: "Blessed are the solitaires and chosen (ones), for you will find the kingdom, for are from it and will return there." 75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber."	2. But when I came, I opened the path, and I taught them about the passage which they will traverse, the elect and solitary, who have known the Father, having believed the truth and all the praises while you offered praise. "So when you offer praise, do so like this: 3. Hear us, Father, just as you heard your only-begotten son, and received him, <i>and gave him rest</i> from any [...] You are the one whose power [...] your armor [...] is [...] light [...] living [...] touch [...] the word [...] repentance [...] life [...] you. <i>You are the thinking and the entire serenity of the solitary.</i> Again: Hear us just as you heard your elect. Through your sacrifice, these will enter; through their good works, <i>these have saved their souls from these blind limbs</i> , so that they might exist eternally. Amen.
24.3 There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire world. 24.4 If that one does not shine, there is darkness.	8.1 The Savior said, "The lamp of the body is the mind. <i>As long as the things inside you are set in order, that is, [...], your bodies are luminous. As long as your hearts are dark, the luminosity you anticipate [...]</i> I have [...] I will go [...] my word [...] I send [...]."
81. Jesus said: "Whoever has grown rich should rule. But whoever has power should renounce." 110. Jesus said: "Whoever has found the world and become rich should renounce the world."	20.1 The Lord said, "[...] stronger than [...]" you [...] to follow you and all the works [...] your hearts. For just as your hearts [...], so [...] the means to overcome the powers above, as well as those below [...]. <i>I say to you, let him who possesses power renounce it and repent.</i> And let him who [...] seek and find and rejoice."

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Dialogue of the Savior</i>
<p>3.4 <i>If, however, you do not come to know yourselves then you dwell in poverty and you are the poverty.</i></p> <p>29.1 Jesus said: "If the flesh emerged from the spirit, it is a wonder. But if the spirit emerged from the body, that is a wonder of wonders!"</p> <p>29.2 <i>Yet, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty.</i></p>	<p>26. The Lord said to her, "Sister, [no one] will be able to inquire about these things except for someone who has somewhere to put them in his heart. [...] to come forth [...] and enter [...], so that they might not hold back [...] <i>this impoverished cosmos.</i>"</p> <p>{Meyer translation: "Sister, [no one] can ask about these things [except] someone who has a place to store them in the heart. And such a person can leave [the world] and enter <i>the place [of life], and will not be held back in this world of poverty.</i>"}</p> <p>69. Mary said, "I want to understand all things, just as they are!"</p> <p>70. The Lord said, "He who will seek out life! <i>For this is their wealth.</i> For the [...] of this cosmos is [...], and its gold and its silver are misleading."</p>
<p>37.1 His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"</p> <p>37.2 Jesus said: "When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take up your clothes and put them under your feet like little children, and tread on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living One and you will not be afraid."</p> <p>50.1 Jesus said: "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' Say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image.'</p> <p>50.2 If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living Father.'</p> <p>50.3 If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say, 'It is movement and repose.'"</p>	<p>27. Matthew said, "Lord, I want to see that place of life, [the place] where there is no wickedness, but rather, there is pure light!"</p> <p>28. The Lord said, "Brother Matthew, <i>you will not be able to see it as long as you are carrying flesh around.</i>"</p> <p>29. Matthew said, "Lord, even if I will not be able to see it, let me know it!"</p> <p>30. The Lord said, "<i>Everyone who has known himself has seen it in everything</i> given to him to do, [...] and has come to [...] it in his goodness."</p>

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Dialogue of the Savior</i>
80. Jesus said: "Whoever has known the world has found the body. And whoever has found the body, the world is no longer worthy of that person."	If one does not understand how the body, which he bears, came into existence, he will perish with it.

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Dialogue of the Savior</i>
37.1 His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"	49. Judas said, "Behold! The governors dwell above us, so it is they who will rule over us!"
37.2 Jesus said: "When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take up your clothes and put them under your feet like little children, and tread on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living One and you will not be afraid."	50. The Lord said, "It is you who will rule over them! But when you rid yourselves of jealousy, then you will clothe yourselves in light and enter the bridal chamber."
75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber."	51. Judas said, "How will our garments be brought to us?"
	52. The Lord said, "There are some who will provide for you, and there are others who will receive [...]. For it is they who will give you your garments. For who will be able to reach that place which is the reward? But the garments of life were given to man because he knows the path by which he will leave. And it is difficult even for me to reach it!"
21.1 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?"	83. Mary said, "There is but one saying I will speak to the Lord concerning the mystery of truth: In this have we taken our stand, and to the cosmic are we transparent."
21.2 He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs."	84. Judas said to Matthew, "We want to understand the sort of garments we are to be clothed with when we depart the decay of the flesh."
21.3 When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!'	85. The Lord said, "The governors and the administrators possess garments granted only for a time, which do not last. But you, as children of truth, not with these transitory garments are you to clothe ourselves. Rather, <i>I say to you that you will become blessed when you strip yourselves!</i> For it is no great thing [...]
21.4 (But) they will strip naked in front of them in order to abandon it, so that the field is returned to them.	outside."
	104. The Lord said, "Who [...]? It behooves whoever has understood the works to do the will of the Father. And as for you, strive to rid yourselves of anger and jealousy, and to <i>strip yourselves</i> of your [...], and not to ...

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Dialogue of the Savior</i>
<p>60. <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea. He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb." They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat it." He said to them: "While it is living he will not eat it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (and then he can eat it)." They said to him: "There is no other way." He said to them: "You also, seek after a place of repose, lest you become corpses and get consumed."</p> <p>17. Jesus said: "I will give you -- what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, and what has never encountered the human mind."</p> <p>101.3 <i>For my mother [birthed my body], but my true [mother] gave me life.</i></p>	<p>56. Matthew said, "Tell me, Lord, <i>how the dead die, and how the living live.</i>" 57. The Lord said, "You have asked me about a saying [...] <i>which eye has not seen, nor have I heard it</i>, except from you. But I say to you that <i>when what invigorates a man is removed, he will be called 'dead'. And when what is alive leaves what is dead, what is alive will be called upon.</i>" 58. Judas said, "Why else, for the sake of truth, do they <die> and live?" 59. The Lord said, "<i>Whatever is born of truth does not die. Whatever is born of woman dies.</i>"</p> <p>71. His disciples said to him, "What should we do to ensure that our work will be perfect?" 72. The Lord said to them, "Be prepared in face of everything. Blessed is the man who has found [...] the contest [...] his eyes. <i>Neither did he kill, nor was he killed, but he came forth victorious.</i>"</p> <p>90. Judas said, "You have told us this out of the mind of truth. When we pray, how should we pray?" 91. The Lord said, "<i>Pray in the place where there is no woman.</i>" 92. Matthew said, "'Pray in the place where there is no woman,' he tells us, <i>meaning 'Destroy the works of womanhood,</i>' not because there is any other manner of birth, but because they will cease giving birth."</p>
<p>7. Jesus said: "Blessed is the lion which the person eats – and the lion becomes a person. And cursed is the person whom the lion eats – and the lion becomes a person."</p> <p>114.1 Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary leave us for women do not deserve life." 114.2 Jesus said: "Look! I will lead her so that I might make her male, which will make her into a living spirit resembling you males." 114.3 For any woman that makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.</p> <p>101.3 <i>For my mother [birthed my body], but my true [mother] gave me life.</i></p>	

Like the *Book of Thomas*, the *Dialogue of the Savior* presents an interpretive expansion of many of the themes introduced in the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. I will list a number of the important interpretive developments that relate to the *Gospel of Thomas* below:

- 1) The 'solitaries' (ΜΟΝΟΧΟΙ) have emerged as a self-conscious group in the *Dialogue of the Savior*, and are given a prayer. The model for these solitary ones is Jesus (the Savior) himself.
- 2) Further support for ΑΝΑΠΥΣΙΣ not being a scribal error in the major redaction is provided by the initial exhortation in *Dialogue of the Savior* 1: "Already the time has come, brothers, for us to abandon our labor [or: suffering] and *stand at rest* (ΑΝΑΠΥΣΙΣ). *For whoever stands at rest* (ΑΝΑΠΥΣΙΣ) *will rest forever.*" As in the major redaction, the *Dialogue of the Savior* instructs readers to move toward rest, repose.
- 3) The *Dialogue of the Savior* augments the major redaction's interest in overcoming the body (e.g., "these have saved their souls from these blind limbs" -- "Judas said to Matthew, 'We want to understand the sort of garments we are to be clothed with when we depart the decay of the flesh.'")
- 4) The 'body' as in *Thomas* 24.3 can become 'divinized' in light in the *Dialogue of the Savior* (e.g., "The lamp of the body is the mind. As long as the things inside you are set in order, that is, [...], your bodies are luminous. As long as your hearts are dark, the luminosity you anticipate [...] I have [...] I will go [...] my word [...] I send [...]."
- 5) The body is not only associated with a 'garment' in the *Dialogue of the Savior*, but this garment is under attack by certain (celestial) governors.

- 6) The bridal chamber is represented as the place where the disciple is clothed in a new garment of light (e.g., “But when you rid yourselves of jealousy, then you will clothe yourselves in light and enter the bridal chamber.”)
- 7) Rejection of marriage and sexual contact is made far more explicit in the *Dialogue of the Savior*, and represents an ascetic intensification. (E.g., 59. The Lord said, “*Whatever is born of truth does not die. Whatever is born of woman dies.*” -- Matthew said, “‘Pray in the place where there is no woman,’ he tells us, *meaning ‘Destroy the works of womanhood,’* not because there is any other manner of birth, but because they will cease giving birth.”)
- 8) The final piece in the Christian Thomasine⁵³⁸ trajectory is the *Acts of Thomas*. It is here that many of the themes introduced in the major redaction find their crescendo. While space does not permit a detailed analysis of this text in comparison with the *Gospel of Thomas*, I will again outline this material with *Gospel of Thomas* material.

The Acts of Thomas and the Major Redaction of the Gospel of Thomas

⁵³⁸ I make this distinction in acknowledgement of the Manichaean psalms that are associated with the Apostle Thomas.

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
<p>1. And he said: "Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings will not experience death."</p> <p>62.1 Jesus said: "I tell my mysteries to those who are worthy of my mysteries."</p>	<p>10.5-7 <i>You, Lord, reveal hidden mysteries, and disclose secret words;</i> You, Lord, tend the good tree, and through your hands all good works are generated; You, Lord, are in all things, pervade all things, are present in all your works, and become manifest through the activity of all things.</p> <p>39.2-4. Twin of Christ, apostle of the Most Hight and initiate into the hidden message of Christ, <i>You who are received his hidden sayings,</i> the collaborator of the Son of God; You who through free became a slave, and, by being sold into slavery, have led many to freedom.</p> <p>40.2b-3. He said to the foal, "Who are you, who do you belong to? The things your mouth has uttered are astonishing -- marvelous things, hidden from most people.</p> <p>88.8. Then he said to the woman, "Go in peace, and may the <i>Lord make you worthy of his mysteries.</i>"</p> <p>124.13-14. You are a groom who departs and is destroyed; <i>Jesus is the true bridegroom</i> who remains forever, immortal, That unveiling festival involves sums of money, and clothes grow old; <i>this involves living words that never end.</i></p>
<p>75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber."</p>	<p>12.7-9 But if you obey and keep your souls pure for God, you'll have <i>living children</i> -- no harm can touch them. You'll also be carefree, living an undisturbed life, without grief or anxiety, waiting to welcome the imperishable, the true marriage. You'll be members of the wedding party who go into that <i>bridal chamber</i> which is full of immortality and light.</p>

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
7. Jesus said: "Blessed is the lion which the person eats – and the lion becomes a person. And cursed is the person whom the lion eats – and the lion becomes a person."	8.8-9. Now the same wine-pourer who had slapped him went down to the well to draw water. A lion happened to be there -- and it killed him, tore him apart, and left his limbs lying right there.
21.4 (But) they will strip naked in front of them in order to abandon it, so that the field is returned to them. 37.1 His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?" 37.2 Jesus said: "When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take up your clothes and put them under your feet like little children, and tread on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living One and you will not be afraid."	14.3-7. So I'll no longer remain covered, since the <i>garment of shame</i> has been taken away from me. <i>I'm no longer ashamed or embarrassed, since the shameful and embarrassing deed has departed far from me</i> ; nor am I terrified, since there's no terror left in me... I've come to despise this man, and this wedding celebration that fades before my very eyes, now that I've been united in another marriage. I've not had intercourse with a husband who passes away -- something that ends up in lewdness and bitterness of soul -- because now I've been joined to a real husband.
3.3 When you come to know yourselves then you will be known, and you will realize that you are the sons of the Living Father. 49. Jesus said: "Blessed are the solitaires and chosen (ones), for you will find the kingdom, for are from it and will return there."	15. 9b-10. But [He] showed me how to seek after myself and to know who I was, who I am, and how I exist in the present, so that I might again become what I was.
Thomas 108. Jesus said: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person."	25.6. Give them drink from your ambrosial fountain, which is never muddied and never gives out.

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
19.3 For there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not taste death.	27.9. Come you who are older than the <i>five members</i> -- mind, conception, thought, reflection, reason-- and commune with these young men.
60. <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea. He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb." They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat it." He said to them: "While it is living he will not eat it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (and then he can eat it)." They said to him: "There is no other way." He said to them: "You also, seek after a place of repose, lest you become corpses and get consumed."	30.4-6. He began to pray: "Lord, judge of the living and the dead, <i>the living who are standing and the dead who are lying down</i> , master and Father of all; but Father, not of the souls that are in bodies but of those that have gone out of them -- for you are master and judge of the souls that are in defilements: Come, right now, when I call you, and show your glory to this man lying here.

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
<p>29.1 Jesus said: "If the flesh emerged from the spirit, it is a wonder. But if the spirit emerged from the body, that is a wonder of wonders!</p> <p>29.2 Yet, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty."</p>	<p>36.1-13. When the apostle had spoken, he came to the city holding that youth by the hand and saying to him, "The things that you've seen, child, are but a few of the many things which God has. For he proclaims good news to us not about these things that are manifest, but promises us things greater than these. <i>As long as we're embodied, we can't say or express what he is to give to our souls.</i></p>
<p>78. Jesus said: "Why have you come out to the field? To see a reed shaken by the wind and to see someone dressed in soft clothes [like your kings] and powerful men? They are dressed in soft clothes, but they don't know the truth."</p>	<p>If we say that he provides us light, we mean this visible light and we already have it. If we speak of wealth that exists and appears in this world, we can identify it, be don't want it, since it was said, 'It's difficult for the rich to enter Heaven's domain.' <i>If we speak about clothing, which the wealthy wear in this life, this, too, has been pointed out -- here is what was said about it <back then>: 'Those who wear soft clothing are in the houses of kings.'</i></p>
<p>28a. Jesus said: "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and I was manifested to them in flesh. I found all of them drunk and none of them thirsting.</p>	<p>If we speak about costly dinners, we have received a command to abstain from them, '<i>not to be weighed down with intoxication, drunkenness and worldly concerns,</i>' <a command> spoken about things that do occur, It's said,</p>
<p>36. Jesus said, "Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, [about your food, about what you're going to eat, or about your clothing--] what you are going to wear."</p>	<p><i>Don't fret about your life -- what you're going to wear; there's more to living than food and clothing, isn't there?</i></p>
<p>17. Jesus said: "I will give you -- what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, and what has never encountered the human mind."</p>	<p>If we speak about worldly rest, the judgment about this, too, has been set out <for us>. But <instead> we speak about the world above, about God, angels, watchers, and holy ones, about ambrosial food and the drink of the true vine; about permanent garments, which don't grow old, about '<i>what eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of sinful people, what God has prepared for those who love him.</i>' These things are what we speak and preach. You too, then, believe in him so that you may live, and have confidence in him so you shall not die. For he is not persuaded by gifts, so that you should make an offering to him, nor does he need sacrifices, so that you should make a sacrifice to him.</p>

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
<p>114.1 Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary leave us for women do not deserve life."</p> <p>114.2 Jesus said: "Look! I will lead her so that I might make her male, which will make her into a living spirit resembling you males."</p> <p>114.3 For any woman that makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.</p>	<p>50.2-3 Come, fellowship of the male; Come, Lady, you who understand the mysteries of the chosen one, Come, Lady, you who share in all the contests of the noble athlete.</p> <p>101.5. He says, 'It's impossible for you to enter the eternal life that I proclaim to you if you don't separate from your wives; women, too, must separate from their husbands.'</p> <p>124.7. You knew that past marriage which does not last; this marriage lasts forever. That intercourse leads to destruction; this to eternal life.</p>
4.3 And they will come to be one alone.	109.23. <i>Being single and alone</i> , I was a stranger to the lodgers at my inn.
90.2 And you will find repose for yourselves.	142.6b. I am becoming free of care or grief, to live in repose.
1. Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings will not taste death.	142.11. Now I am dying, but I shall come to life and not taste death again.
29.2 Yet, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty.	144.7. You it is who brought me into the poverty of this world, and invited me to true wealth.
<p>22.3 Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when you make the male and the female into a solitary one, so that the male is not male nor the female female. And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]."</p>	<p>147.9-11. That which is inside I have made outside, and that which is outside <inside>, and all of your fullness has been fulfilled in me. I've not turned back, but advanced forward, that I might not be ashamed. I've brought the dead to life and overcome the Living One and filled up what was lacking, that I might receive the crown of victory.</p>

Unlike the *Book of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas* appeals to a number of emergent canonical traditions. In the *Acts* Jesus heals, casts out demons, resurrects, and proclaims the future judgment (which he will preside over), whereas in the *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus doesn't any of this. What is most important in the *Acts of Thomas* is the form of Christian praxis that it intends to elaborate. Conversion, in the *Acts of Thomas*, requires asceticism, chastity, and the rejection of marriage -- indeed, the *Acts of Thomas* is an overtly ascetical text. One must become a 'twin' of Jesus in the *Acts of Thomas*; this is expressed, again, in bridal chamber imagery (*Acts of Thomas* 14). That Jesus is the bridegroom of the initiate is taken so seriously that many of the narratives (or 'acts') in the text show young brides rejecting marriage (sometimes on their wedding night). The Genesis 1-3 themes, however, do not play as prominently in the *Acts of Thomas* as they do in the *Gospel of Thomas*; in the *Acts of Thomas* asceticism and virginity is the primary focus.

While the above charts of the parallels in the later Thomasine trajectory require further study, I do believe they evince influence by the *Gospel of Thomas*. Moreover, the material above derives primarily from the major redaction, rather than the earlier hypothesized strata outlined in the Appendix, which strongly suggests that my delineation of the major redaction in this chapter and the Appendix is on the right track. In these later Thomasine texts we witness a conscious shift toward a more expressly articulated asceticism. This development will be discussed more fully in chapter four.

Genesis 1-3 and Eden in the Broader Syriac Christian Tradition

Beyond the Thomasine trajectory and the major redaction specifically, the Genesis 1-3 narrative serves as major referential thematic matrix for much of the Syriac Christian tradition. However, this is not meant to suggest that Syria was the sole possessor of commentary on the Genesis 1-3 tradition, but that in Syria specifically the Kingdom of God *was* the Garden of Eden. The Genesis 1 and Garden of Eden stories play most prominently in Syria in the *Book of Steps* (as outlined above), but it also operates in some other Syrian Christian texts, which I will demonstrate below.

The Genesis 1-3 Narrative in the Odes of Solomon

The *Odes of Solomon*, which were introduced in chapter one as one of the earliest Syriac Christian texts, also positions the Genesis 1 condition at the center of the Christian life. The eleventh ode especially appeals to the Genesis 1 experience and parallels portions of the *Gospel of Thomas* tradition. The most obvious parallel is with the dialogue in *Thomas* 13. In the eleventh ode, the intoxicating waters that caused Thomas to claim that Jesus was his teacher (which Jesus then refutes) are elaborated as follows: “And speaking waters touched my lips from the fountain of the Lord generously. And so I drank and became intoxicated, from the living water that does not die. And my intoxication did not cause ignorance, but I abandoned vanity.” The only difference here is that these words are spoken by Solomon rather than Thomas. Considering that this tradition (as exhibited above) is paralleled in both the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Acts of Thomas* and that the *Odes of Solomon* are universally considered Syrian, this complex of material greatly buttresses the proposal that the major redaction is indeed Syrian Christian. Beyond the *Thomas* 13 parallel, the eleventh ode also alludes to the garment put on after the fall and the Sabbath rest in Genesis 1-3: “And I rejected the folly cast upon

the earth, and stripped it off and cast it from me. And the Lord renewed me with His garment, and possessed me by His light. And from above He gave me immortal rest, and I became like the land that blossoms and rejoices in its fruits.” In *Thomas* 37 the garment donned after the fall is stripped off, and in Greek *Thomas* 2.2 the reader is granted rest after ruling (as Adam was intended to). This section of the *Odes of Solomon* may have once been a part of baptismal liturgy. If this were the case, than E. Pagels’ suggestion that the experience of the first creation in Genesis 1 was enacted through baptism (i.e. the stripping of the garment, becoming naked as a child in Eden, and donning the true garment of light symbolized by the baptismal font) finds further support.

The eleventh ode also parallels *Thomas* 19’s description of life in Paradise:

<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>
19.1 Jesus said: “Blessed is the one who came into being from the beginning, before he came to be.”	And He took me to His Paradise, wherein is the wealth of the Lord's pleasure.
19.2 If you become my disciples and listen to my sayings, these stones will become your servants.	
19.3 For there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall.	I beheld blooming and fruit-bearing trees, And self-grown was their crown. Their branches were sprouting and their fruits were shining.
Whoever knows them will not experience death.	From an immortal land were their roots.

The eleventh ode, like *Thomas*, leaves Paradise open for its readers: “Indeed, there is much room in Your Paradise. And there is nothing in it which is barren, but everything is filled with fruit. Glory be to You, O God, the delight of Paradise for ever.” These parallels suggest that it is possible that the community behind the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* was somehow related to the community that used the *Odes of Solomon*. This is not to suggest,

however, that the author of the *Odes* had a written *Gospel of Thomas* beside him/herself when he composed the text. Rather, it appears that both traditions draw from a common thematic matrix, which in this case included the notion that the condition of the first creation in Genesis 1 is the Kingdom of God, and that the living water of the Lord is (spiritually) intoxicating.

Aphrahat and the Genesis 1-5 Narrative

Aphrahat, like the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Steps* explored above, interprets the first creation (in Paradise) as a reality accessible only for virgins. According to Aphrahat, Eve was responsible for opening up the path to the fall of the perfect image of God:

Because of her the earth was cursed, that it should bring forth thorns and tares. Accordingly, by the coming of the offspring of the Blessed Mary the thorns are uprooted, the sweat wiped away, the fig-tree cursed, the dust made salt, the curse nailed to the cross, the edge of the sword removed from before the tree of life and it given as food to the faithful, and Paradise promised to the blessed and to virgins and to the saints. So the fruit of the tree of life is given as food to the faithful and to virgins, and to those that do the will of God has the door been opened and the way made plain. And the fountain flows and gives drink to the thirsty. The table is laid and the supper prepared. The fatted ox is slain and the cup of redemption mixed. The feast is prepared and the Bridegroom at hand, soon to take his place.⁵³⁹

While Aphrahat does not focus often on the Edenic condition, it is clear that he associates the *benai qeiamā* (the 'sons of the covenant'⁵⁴⁰) with the virgins who will enter the Garden Paradise and serve the Bridegroom. The relationship between the *qeiamā* and the community responsible for the *Gospel of Thomas* will be explored in the next chapter; for now, however, it is important to note that virginity was required before entering the bridal chamber, which is the Holy of Holies. This does not mean that those outside the ascetical core of the church (i.e. the *benai* and *benat qeiamā*) were not permitted to enter Paradise. Aphrahat, like most of early

⁵³⁹ Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, "On Monks," VI. J Gwynn's translation.

⁵⁴⁰ See chapter one and four for a fuller description of this group.

Syrian Christianity maintains that there are different 'levels' of Christian commitment in the Church. But it is only the *benai* and *benat qeïama* that will enter the bridal chamber. Those who do not embrace virginity and a life of constant prayer are permitted only to enter the Garden (i.e. the Holy area around the Tabernacle), but not to enter the Holy of Holies marked by the Tree of Life.

St. Ephrem and the Genesis 1-3 Narrative

We saw above how St. Ephrem also interpreted the Garden of Eden as the Tabernacle of God. This sacred geography outlined the path back to the Paradise experience. In St. Ephrem's eloquent *Hymns on Paradise* Eden also becomes synonymous with the Church. In this sense the Church is the fulfillment of the Edenic promises of old:

He planted the garden most fair,
he built the Church most pure.
On the tree of knowledge
he set the commandment.
He gave joy, but they did not respond;
he warned but they did not fear.
In the Church he established the Word
which causes joy by its threats.

Like the *Book of Steps*, Ephrem also divides the Garden of Eden experience into a number of 'levels.'

The mystery of levels
of that garden of Life
He prefigured the Ark
and at Mount Sinai.
Symbols of paradise
and its disposition he has depicted for us.

For Ephrem, as for the *Book of Steps*, there is a distinction between the ascetical heroes (i.e. the 'Perfect' and/or the *qeïama*⁵⁴¹) and the broader church. The ascetical core of the church in

⁵⁴¹ See chapter four for a fuller description of this ascetical community at the core of Syrian Christian spirituality.

Ephrem's hymns enter the bridal chamber, the area around the Tree of Life. Yet, this Garden experience is accessible, as in Aphrahat, to the broader community through the sacraments of the Church:

The assembly of the saints
is like to paradise.
There every day is picked
the fruit of him who gives life to all;
There, O my brothers, are pressed
the grapes for the Medicine of Life.

Though Ephrem does not specifically quote the *Gospel of Thomas*, he does evince a commitment to similar themes -- namely, the Garden of Eden as the Kingdom of God, the bridal chamber as the Holy of Holies marked by the Tree of Life. R. Murray also asserts this, writing "There are hints also of the imagery of the Temple. The Tree of Knowledge blocks the entrance as the veil did before the Holy Place, and the fruit of the Tree of Life is compared to the altar of incense."⁵⁴² The main variation, however, between *Thomas* and Ephrem concerns the place of the Church within the Genesis 1 experience. This emphasis on the Church as the new Eden is also elaborated in the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* (ca. 6th century), which was formerly attributed to St. Ephrem:

Now Eden is the holy Church, and the Church is the compassion of God...
Eden is the holy Church, and the paradise which was in it is the land of rest,
and the inheritance of life, which God has prepared for all the holy children of
men. And because Adam was a priest and king and prophet, God brought him
into paradise that he might minister in Eden, the holy Church.⁵⁴³

This text, along with Ephrem, makes the Church synonymous with Eden, and Adam a priest serving before the Holy of Holies in the Edenic Tabernacle. While this is not precisely what

⁵⁴² Murray, R., *Church and Symbol*, 261.

⁵⁴³ *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, Syriac edition 20.7-22.5.

happens in the major redaction, both traditions share the Garden of Eden story as a soteriological stage.

Philoxenus of Mabbug

The fifth century Syrian writer and proponent of 'miaphysitism,'⁵⁴⁴ Philoxenus of Mabbug, presents in some of his thirteen homilies or *memre* another Syrian interpretation of the Garden of Eden story. In the fourth *memra*, "On Simplicity," he writes that:

Adam and Eve possessed simplicity until they encountered the Enemy who manipulated Adam into exercising judgment on God's command to him, i.e., that he should not eat from the fruit of the tree (4; 80:5-81:20).

This simplicity was, for Philoxenus, synonymous with the contemplative life and praxis of the monk. The monks who reenter Eden do so through the interior life, not necessarily by following the praxis outlined in the major redaction. R. Kitchen notes that: "While Philoxenus does utilize a modified Upright/Perfect dichotomy [as in the *Book of Steps*], his references to the Genesis narrative are of a different character. The monks are called upon to reenter the purity of Eden, but to do so more via interior spiritual transformation than through external roles and actions."⁵⁴⁵ This spiritual transformation was to be enacted through simplicity:

"The advice which [the Enemy] brought that childlike and simple person made him a judge of the commandment of God to him. Because it has destroyed his simplicity, [Adam] did not prosper in his judgment, for he deemed foolishly that it is appropriate to listen to an enemy rather than to a friend" (Memra 4, 81.1-4).

Philoxenus portrays Eden as a place where angelic minds/souls contemplate the glory of the Lord in his celestial Temple. In this sense 'nakedness,' as for the major redactor, was an

⁵⁴⁴ The Christological formula that proclaims that the two natures of Christ (i.e. divine and human) are united without confusion or alteration. This was a controversial position in the wake of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E.

⁵⁴⁵ Kitchen, R.A., "Syriac Additions to Anderson: The Garden of Eden in the Book of Steps and Philoxenus of Mabbug," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, Vol. 6, (2001), 33

incorporeal state. In his sixth memra, "On the Fear of God," Philoxenus details how asceticism, and most prominently celibacy, leads the monk back to the Edenic condition. R.

Kitchen summarizes Philoxenus' interpretation of Genesis as follows:

"Genesis is utilized by Philoxenus to model the interior spiritual state of Perfection towards which all monks were laboring. Simplicity, prayer, fear of God, and innocence all function more efficiently in an enclosed monastic community attempting to draw the boundaries of the Garden of Eden around them. For both the author of the Book of Steps and for Philoxenus, Eden still exists and can be reentered. Whatever human beings have attained the status of Perfection, there the Garden exists and the regrettable events recorded in Genesis 4-3 have been reversed."⁵⁴⁶

The major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*, as outlined above, also evinces a very similar hermeneutic and referential horizon: the Garden of Eden story. This brief investigation of some of the Genesis 1-3 themes circulating in later Christian Syria demonstrates that the creation stories played prominently in Syria, and that the *Gospel of Thomas* would make sense in such an environment.

Conclusion

After considering the thematic coherence of the major redaction and the thematic parallels in later Syrian and Thomasine texts it is time to determine whether the major redaction is itself Syrian. This chapter set out to answer two questions: 1) whether the material designated as the major redaction in the Appendix is thematically coherent, and 2) whether the later Syrian/Thomasine texts continue to elaborate the themes introduced in the major redaction. The earlier strata that were illustrated in the Appendix do not, in my estimation, demand or even suggest a particularly Syrian context. Though it is possible that the initial chreia collection and judgment redaction (as hypothesized in the Appendix) were composed in Syria, there is no evidence that would lead me to assume such. Given the

⁵⁴⁶ Kitchen, R.A., "Syriac Additions to Anderson," 45-47.

significant parallels with Q⁵⁴⁷ it is plausible that the two texts derive from a Palestinian environment.⁵⁴⁸ Whatever the merits of this speculation are, what is important for this dissertation is the place of the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* recovered in the Appendix. My case for a specifically Syrian derivation for the major redaction depends on two major pieces of evidence: 1) the further elaboration of themes particular to the major redaction (rather than the rest of the text) in the Thomas trajectory⁵⁴⁹ and broader Syrian literature, and 2) coherence with the character and ethos of Syrian Christianity in the first two centuries as outlined at the end of chapter one. The first point has been demonstrated, I believe, definitively in this chapter. The case for the first point can be laid out, again, as follows:

- 1) The major redactional material is elaborated, paralleled, and commented on by the *Book of Thomas* and the *Acts of Thomas*, both of which are definitely Syrian Christian documents. It is difficult to think of a more plausible solution to this phenomenon than one that looks to Syria as the context for the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*.
- 2) These elaborations of the *Gospel of Thomas* in the later Thomasine tradition are almost entirely drawn from the material in the major redaction (as outlined in the Appendix).
- 3) The Apostle Thomas, who is the purported authority behind the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*, is remembered as *the* Apostle to Syria. Moreover, the name 'Judas Thomas' is unique only to the Osrhoene region in Syria.

⁵⁴⁷ As reconstructed by the International Q Project at Claremont University, and stratified by J.S. Kloppenborg.

⁵⁴⁸ See chapter four.

⁵⁴⁹ It is significant to note that Thomas is remembered as *the* Apostle to Syria.

- 4) The Genesis 1-3 themes that the major redaction elaborates also play especially prominently in other Syrian Christian literature (e.g., the *Book of Steps*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Odes of Solomon*).

These four elements when taken together strongly suggest that the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* occurred in Syria. Moreover, given that fact that the bones of Thomas were at one time venerated in the city of Edessa, there is a good chance that the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* occurred in Edessa. I can think of no other explanation for the elements listed above beyond the Syrian explanation just proposed.

The second point is demonstrated by the fact that the major redaction coheres with the thematic propositions outlined at the end of chapter one. While none of these themes when taken alone are uniquely Syrian, it is their existence together that makes them particularly distinctive of early Christian Syria.

- 1) Life in the material condition is problematic and needs to be overcome.

This point is exhibited in *Thomas* 29, 80, 87, and 112. In each of these cases, the material condition in the body/flesh is to be overcome by the spirit within. In the major redaction, the reader was to rediscover the initial image of God existing within. If, however, this image was not recovered and brought forth, the human person would die with the body: 70. Jesus said: "When you birth the one within you, that one will save you. If you do not have that one within you, that one will kill you."

- 2) One must avoid carnal behavior by avoiding meat and wine.

This point is exhibited in *Thomas* 11.2 and 60. In these two cases, the eating of dead things (i.e. carcasses) is to be replaced with eating living things like the 'living' Tree in Paradise as discussed in *Thomas* 19.3: "For there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved

summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not experience death.”

3) One should embrace celibacy or remain a virgin for life.

This point is exhibited in *Thomas* 49, 75, 4.3, 114, and 106. In each of these instances the major redactor exhorts readers to regain the first image of God that was both male and female. In the Thomasine interpretation of the Genesis 1-3 narrative, sexual intercourse was both a result of the fall and the embodiment in fleshly garments that followed. The major redaction, like much of early Syrian Christianity, exhorts the faithful to give up sexual intercourse for the Kingdom of God -- the *Gospel of Thomas* is no different in this regard.

4) One must become a solitary one.

This point is exhibited in *Thomas* 49: “Blessed are the solitaires (MONOXOC) and chosen (ones), for you will find the kingdom, for are from it and will return there.”

5) One must join the divine Bridegroom in the Bridal Chamber.

This point is exhibited in *Thomas* 75: “Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires (MONOXOC) are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber.”

6) One must overcome fate.

This proposition is not paralleled in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

7) The Kingdom is in the Beginning in Genesis 1; one must return there.

This point, as the present chapter has attempted to demonstrate, is evinced as the context for most of the major redactional material.

Though the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* does not condemn wine or evince a concern to ‘overcome fate,’ other texts in the Thomas trajectory do. Other than wine and the problem posed by fate (which primarily occupied Bardaisan), the major redaction fits

comfortably within this outline of the character and ethos of Syrian Christianity in the first two centuries. Thus, in conclusion to the material explored above, it can be stated definitively that the major redaction is framed by the Genesis 1-3 narrative and that it evinces motifs that, when taken together, are particular to the Osrhoene region in Syria. In the next chapter I will consider the implications of this conclusion as it relates to the *Gospel of Thomas*' socio-historical context.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: Situating the Gospel of Thomas

Half a century ago H. Koester heralded the *Gospel of Thomas*' importance for the understanding of early Christian history, predicting that "The *Gospel of Thomas* will receive more detailed attention, since solving some of the problems of this recently discovered text will doubtless have far-reaching consequences for the study of early Christianity as a whole."⁵⁵⁰ S. Patterson was one of the first to take up this task without imposing a 'gnostic' categorical context in his 1988 Claremont Graduate University dissertation, *The Gospel of Thomas within the Development of Early Christianity*.⁵⁵¹ While this dissertation proved groundbreaking in regard to its inauguration of new approaches to *Thomas*, the questions concerning *Thomas*' place within early Christianity remained unanswered. Patterson in his subsequent book on the subject, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, reflects on this situation:

When I began to ask the question of how Thomas Christians and Thomas Christianity might have fit into the overall development of ancient Christianity, I found that after yet another decade of study, though significant progress had been made in many areas of research on the Gospel of Thomas, these preliminary questions had still not been satisfactorily been answered.⁵⁵²

His book was an answer to these still-reigning preliminary questions. In the first half of the work he set out to place *Thomas* within the context of and in conversation with other early Christian literature. This first part of the book was important because Patterson was astutely aware that other scholars were arguing that "If it could be shown that Thomas made use of

⁵⁵⁰ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 119.

⁵⁵¹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas within the development of early Christianity*, PhD Dissertation, The Claremont Graduate University, 1988.

⁵⁵² Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 3.

the canonical gospels, it seemed that one would at least have to relegate it to the second century, and thus of little relevance for addressing the acute problem of Christian origins.” The first part of Patterson’s book proved definitively, however, that the *Gospel of Thomas* preserves a Jesus sayings tradition *independent of both the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John*,⁵⁵³ thereby justifying Koester’s earlier intuition.⁵⁵⁴

In the second part of Patterson’s book he set out to recover the character and ethos of what he termed ‘Thomas Christianity.’ He believed that “With a description of Thomas Christianity in hand, it was then possible to attempt to locate this particular group of early Christians within the broader historical development of the various groups that grew out of the Jesus movement.”⁵⁵⁵ Patterson’s move from the textual and literary considerations of *Thomas* in conversation with other early Gospels to the recovery and reconstruction of an early Christian ‘movement’ behind the text inaugurated a search for the non-‘gnostic’ community responsible for the production of the *Gospel of Thomas*. B. Mack echoes this turn from literary-textual consideration to a search for the community behind *Thomas*, declaring that, “The Gospel of Thomas documents a Jesus movement with its own distinctive history.”⁵⁵⁶ However, experimentation (as exhibited in the Appendix) with Jesus sayings does not necessarily require a particular self-conscious movement behind it. It could be merely an occasion for interpretive play and expansion -- and it is also possible that we have read

⁵⁵³ See S.J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* chapters 1-3.

⁵⁵⁴ Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 75-125.

⁵⁵⁵ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 4.

⁵⁵⁶ Mack, B., *Who Wrote the New Testament?: The Making of the Christian Myth*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 61.

these interpretive and elaborative shifts as taking place within a self-defined community, when it may have been the result of performancial variation and/or reinterpretation.

This is not to claim, however, that there wasn't any 'Thomas community' behind the Gospel, only that it should not be assumed from the outset. I offer this caution because I believe *Thomas* is not the product of *one* community, but the product of a number of free performancial variations (perhaps within a Jesus association or non-Christian meal or symposium setting⁵⁵⁷), which were then *used* and *further elaborated with the addition of new sayings* by a later community with a pronounced interest in incorporating Jesus' sayings into the Genesis 1-3 narrative. In this sense, I intend to suggest later in this chapter that *Thomas* began as a chreia collection that was used in performance and perhaps educational contexts, but became more than a chreia collection as it expanded into Syria. In the last chapter I detailed the thematic components associated with the major redaction, which were for the most part associated with the creation stories in Genesis 1-3, and proposed that the major redaction was decidedly Syrian. The task of this concluding chapter is to understand the major redaction's place within the history of early Syrian Christianity outlined in chapter one and to consider ways in which the *Gospel of Thomas* was produced.

"What can be said about the Christian beginnings in the Osrhoëne, especially in its capital Edessa?"⁵⁵⁸ H. Koester considers the Thomas tradition to be the earliest form of

⁵⁵⁷ This is not to suggest, however, that these were mutually exclusive. See the discussion Hal Taussig's recent book, *In the Beginning was the Meal*, below.

⁵⁵⁸ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 127.

Christianity in the Osrhoëne, in contrast to W. Bauer who claimed it was the Marcionites.⁵⁵⁹

He offers three main reasons⁵⁶⁰:

- a) "The author of the (Coptic) *Gospel of Thomas* is named "The Twin (*Didymos*) Judas Thomas," and in the book of *Thomas the Contender* Jesus' words (written down by Matthew or Matthias) are spoken to "Judas Thomas." This unique appellation of the apostle Thomas has parallels only in the tradition of the Osrhoëne. In the *Acts of Thomas* he is introduced as Ἰούδας Θωμᾶς ὁ καὶ Δίδυμος. Also in the catholic Abgar legend from Edessa, Thomas is called Ἰούδας ὁ καὶ Θωμᾶς. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any connection of the names of Judas and Thomas; but in John 14:22, instead of "Judas, not Iscariot," sy^e reads "Judas Thomas" (sy^s reads "Thomas"). For control we can refer to the non-Edessene *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, in which the writer is called "Thomas, the Israelite (Philosopher)." Thus it is obvious that this tradition of "Judas Thomas (the Twin)" is peculiar to early Christianity in the Osrhoëne.
- b) The *Acts of Thomas* shows several pre-Manichaean elements, i.e., it stands halfway between Christian and Manichaean Gnosis. Together with other Acts of the Apostles, it was then used by the Manichaeans... There can be little doubt that the *Gospel of Thomas* came to the Manichaeans from Edessa rather than Egypt.
- c) The *Gospel of Thomas* was used by the author of the *Acts of Thomas*, which certainly was written in the Osrhoëne in the early third century A.D., and which is the direct continuation of the eastern Syrian Thomas tradition as it is represented in the second century by the *Gospel of Thomas*."

Koester's first point is well received. To my knowledge, the Apostle Judas Thomas is particular to the Osrhoëne region of Syria. Koester's second point, however, deserves further clarification and research. I would not agree that *Thomas* stands "halfway between Christian and Manichaean Gnosis," as this moves beyond our evidence. All we know, based on the Thomasine sayings circulating in the Manichaean tradition (including the *Manichaean Psalms of*

⁵⁵⁹ Bauer, W., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (London, 1934), see chapter one especially.

⁵⁶⁰ The following is a direct quotes from Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 127-128. Emphasis mine.

*Thomas*⁵⁶¹) is that some Manichaeans *used* traditions associated with the *Gospel of Thomas*; but use does not necessarily imply influence or causation. In other words, the Manichaeans may have used parts of the *Thomas* tradition because they believed they were in accordance with their beliefs or could be made to cohere with their views. This does not mean, however, that the Manichaeans drew their beliefs partially from the Thomas tradition -- they might have, but the evidence is not conclusive on this point yet. Koester's third point concerning the *Acts of Thomas* is also well received, as the *Acts of Thomas* are certainly within the trajectory inaugurated by the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁵⁶² However, it can be expanded substantially by adding the *Book of Thomas*, which represents a more concentrated continuation of the tradition inaugurated in the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁵⁶³

Beyond the question of *Thomas*' Syrian provenance exists the problem of dating the *Gospel of Thomas*. According to S. Patterson:

The fact that Thomas is not dependent on the synoptic gospels is informative insofar as it means that these texts, the latest (Luke) having been written perhaps near the end of the first century, do not offer a *terminus a quo* for Thomas. But this only widens the parameters within which we may work; it

⁵⁶¹ E.g. *Manichaean Psalm* 278.99.27-30

The vain garment of this flesh I put off (saved and sanctified!).
I caused the clean feet of my soul to trample confidently upon it.
The Gods who are clothed with Christ, with them I stood in line.
(Cf. *Thomas* 37)

Manichaean Psalm-Book 160.20-21

The Kingdom of Heaven, look, it is inside us. Look, it is outside us. If we believe in it, we shall live forever.
(Cf. *Thomas* 22)

Manichaean Psalm-Book 192-2-3

To the old people with grey hair the little children give instruction; those six years old give instructions to those sixty years old.
(Cf. *Thomas* 4)

Manichaean Psalm-Book 257

This lion that is within me, I have strangled. I have turned him out of my soul, him who ever defiles me.
(Cf. *Thomas* 7)

⁵⁶² This point is evinced in the substantial parallels mapped out in chapter four.

⁵⁶³ This too is exhibited in the parallels presented in chapter four.

does not in itself suggest a date for Thomas. It simply indicates that Thomas could have been assembled any time after the origin of the Jesus movement. As for a *terminus ad quem*, the manuscript tradition itself provides one limiting factor. The oldest manuscript evidence for Thomas is POxy 1, which Grenfell and Hunt assigned an approximate date of 200 C.E. on the basis of the script and the level at which the fragment was uncovered at Oxyrhynchus. If one assumes for the moment that the Gospel of Thomas comes not from Egypt, but Syria... then the actual *terminus ad quem* can be pushed back. We may allow a generation for the growth in popularity of the book, such as would result in its wider dissemination, and yet another for the popularity to reach Egypt. This brings us to the middle of the second century.⁵⁶⁴

Koester agrees with this cautious date writing, "If this gospel had its origin in the Osrhoëne, but was already known in Egypt in the second century, as the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1.654 and 655 testify, the time of its writing must have been ca. A.D. 150 or earlier. *This proves that the Thomas tradition was the oldest form of Christianity in Edessa, antedating the beginning of both Marcionite and orthodox Christianity in that area.*"⁵⁶⁵

Patterson pushes this middle second century further back arguing that "several factors weigh in favor of a date well before the end of the first century,"⁵⁶⁶ these are as follows:

- 1) "[T]he way in which Thomas appeals to the authority of particular prominent figures (Thomas, James) against the competing claims of others (Peter, Matthew)."⁵⁶⁷
- 2) [I]ts genre, the sayings collection, which seems to have declined in importance after the emergence of the more biographical and dialogical forms near the end of the first century..."⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 113. See Grenfell and Hun, ΛΟΓΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ, 6.

⁵⁶⁵ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 129. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁶⁶ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 120.

⁵⁶⁷ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 120.

⁵⁶⁸ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 120.

3) “[I]ts primitive christology, which seems to presuppose a theological climate more primitive even than the later stages of the synoptic sayings gospel, Q.”⁵⁶⁹

While I find no reason to argue against the latter two points, I believe the first point can be challenged on the basis of literary convention. While James, Thomas, Matthew, and Peter are mentioned in *Thomas* 12, there is no explicit evidence, in my estimation, that requires the assumption that that Jamesian, Matthean, and Petrine communities are being embraced or parodied. Granted, James is referred to in a leadership role, but this need not demand that we associate this mention with a self-defined Jerusalem community. It could’ve been a saying that was circulated, and the major redactor felt the need to respond to it in favor of his or her proposed ‘hero,’ Thomas. Yet, here I see another issue: the major redactor scoffs at leadership (*Thomas* 3.1 and 13.1). Thomas himself is not granted any leadership status, he is merely granted misdirected insight (*Thomas* 13.1) with a scandalous teaching on the side (*Thomas* 13.2) -- but he is not proclaimed a leader. While some would like to see James’ mention as evidence that *Thomas* is part of the ‘Jamesian’ form of Christianity, I think we should resist such a move. I offer three reasons: first, this effort leads, almost inevitably, to a tempering or domestication of a diverse tradition; it is a way of labeling *Thomas* so that it can be categorized and made to fit with our created master-narrative(s) of Christian origins. Second, the general understanding of James’ praxis, as presented primarily in Paul’s letters and *Acts*, includes circumcision, fasting, Jewish dietary restrictions, and Sabbath observance. However, *Thomas* either parodies these observances (e.g. *Thomas* 14.1) or reinterprets them substantially (e.g. *Thomas* 27, 53). Third, James, in my interpretation presented in chapter two, is not necessarily being ‘praised’ but caricatured. The same happens with John the Baptist in

⁵⁶⁹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 120.

Thomas 46. While James and John the Baptist are both acknowledged as important figures, they are both 'set aside' as it were in favor of Jesus and Thomas. Moreover, literarily speaking, in *Thomas* 13.1 the characters of Matthew and Peter don't play the roles of representatives of particular communities, rather it seems that they are used as a literary mechanism to set up Jesus' response. I take this position because other early Christian texts, such as the *Dialogue of the Savior*, use this dialogical convention without appealing to specific communities. Are we to suppose that every time Matthew or Peter is mentioned in the *Dialogue of the Savior* that the communities associated with them are also being referred to? I think it easier to read them merely as literary characters used to set up Jesus' responses.

Patterson argues further that:

Together, these factors [listed above] suggest a date for *Thomas* in the vicinity of 70-80 C.E. As for its provenance, while it is possible, even likely, that an early version of this collection associated with James circulated in the environs of Jerusalem, the Gospel of *Thomas* in more or less its present state comes from eastern Syria, here the popularity of the apostle Thomas (Judas Didymos Thomas) is well attested.⁵⁷⁰

While this date is certainly possible, I find little evidence to suggest that parts of *Thomas* were the product of a Jamesian Jerusalem community. Just because James is mentioned and praised does not mean that *Thomas* should be located in Jerusalem. In fact, beyond the mention of James, there is little if any evidence for a Jerusalem provenance for the earlier layer(s) of *Thomas*.⁵⁷¹ Yet, I believe Patterson is correct in regard to the provenance for the complete Gospel, which he locates in Syria. The task of dating and determining the

⁵⁷⁰ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 120.

⁵⁷¹ See the Appendix.

provenance of *Thomas* is made more difficult on account of its stratified history.⁵⁷² Patterson also acknowledges this problem:

when dating an ancient text, one should always be as clear as possible about *which version* of the text one means to date. As a simple collection of sayings, the Gospel of Thomas poses problems of this nature, but on a much larger scale. Without having to look after the narrative integrity of the text and its overall aesthetic quality, each new curator of the Thomas collection -- and perhaps many simultaneously -- could easily have added new sayings as he or she came across them, or sloughed away outmoded sayings as their relevance to new situations in the life of the sage became questionable.⁵⁷³

Since the work of G. Quispel⁵⁷⁴ there has been a tacit assumption that the Jamesian (Jewish-Christian) Jerusalem group was behind the earliest pieces of the Thomas tradition and that the later material derives from Syria. What has been needed is a stratification theory for *Thomas* that could make sense of these different layers. B. Mack echoes this need while reflecting on the differences between the hypothesized Q community and the Thomas community: "Unraveling [the] history [of the Thomas group] is a bit more difficult than in the case of the Q people. That is because scholars have not yet found a way to assign sayings in the Gospel of Thomas to layers in the history of its transmission."⁵⁷⁵ While the brief stratification proposal in the Appendix to this dissertation requires a more detailed analysis, it does help in dating the diverse material in *Thomas*. Moreover, it shows us that each redactional piece could've derived from different contexts and different performances.⁵⁷⁶ Thus, while the

⁵⁷² See the Appendix.

⁵⁷³ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 115.

⁵⁷⁴ See chapter two, and G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament," *Vigiliae Christianae*, No. 11 (1957), 189-207; "Some Remarks on the Gospel of Thomas," *New Testament Studies* No. 5 (1958/1959), 276-290; "L'Evangile selon Thomas et les Clementines," *Vigiliae Christianae* No. 12 (1958), 181-196; "The 'Gospel of Thomas' and the 'Gospel of the Hebrews,'" *JVTS* No. 12 (1966), 371-382; And most importantly: "The Gospel of Thomas Revisited," in *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica: Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel*, ed. J. Oort (Brill, 2008).

⁵⁷⁵ Mack, B., *Who Wrote the New Testament?*, 61.

⁵⁷⁶ See my discussion of Hal Taussig's work on performance and the meal setting below.

major redaction detailed in chapter four is Syrian, the other intervening strata may not be. In past reconstructions of *Thomas*' historical situation (save A. DeConcick's work in *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*) scholars have treated *Thomas* as a non-stratified unitary document, which has led to the attribution of the entire text to Syria and to one Judas Thomas in particular. As I will show below, I think the stratified nature of *Thomas* (as presented in the Appendix) makes such a broad attribution difficult to substantiate and maintain.

Who was this 'Judas' who was called Didymos and Thomas? Koester declares that "Thomas was the authority for an indigenous Syrian Christianity even before the formation of noticeable orthodox influence in this area [of the Osrhoëne]."⁵⁷⁷ However, we should define what we mean by an 'authority' here: was Judas Thomas a bishop? Or was he a fictive authority appealed to by later writers? B. Mack argues that "Early Christian authors writing in their own name had to appeal to apostolic tradition, and schools of thought, especially in gnostic circles, had to struggle with the apostolic myth in order to posit the moment when their special teaching was revealed to the world."⁵⁷⁸ Koester also argues that "It is important to distinguish such traditions from later catholic-orthodox claims to the names and authority of certain apostles. The purpose of such claims was to establish the legitimate apostolic doctrine and succession in the antignostic controversy."⁵⁷⁹ Yet, despite this caution, Koester declares that "There is no doubt that these traditions had their ultimate origin in the actual, historical missionary activity of these apostles in the areas in which their names survived; i.e., they were already in existence before the weapons of the antiheretic controversy had been

⁵⁷⁷ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 133.

⁵⁷⁸ Mack, B., *Who Wrote the New Testament?*, 226.

⁵⁷⁹ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 133.

forged.”⁵⁸⁰ However, in the Appendix I propose that *Thomas* was a stratified document, and in my tentative reconstruction of the strata I argue that the attribution of the tradition to ‘Judas Didymos Thomas’ did not occur until the major redaction. I find no reason to assume that the Apostle Thomas was attributed to the collection in the earlier stages. Rather, in my estimation, it appears that the attribution was attached when the earlier textual tradition reached Syria where ‘Judas Thomas’ was already a hero. This attribution, then, would’ve justified the earlier parts of the textual tradition’s authority. Such a phenomenon was hardly rare in early Christianity; the Q Gospel (if it existed) did not, it would seem, circulate with an attribution to a particular apostle.⁵⁸¹ The *Fourth Gospel* also circulated without a proper name for a period of time before being attributed to the Apostle John.⁵⁸² Given my reconstruction of the earlier strata of *Thomas* in the Appendix, I too think that earlier versions of the tradition circulated without the attribution of Judas Didymos Thomas. Moreover, the *Book of Thomas* shows how ‘Thomas’ (twin) operated more as a soteriological ‘title’ than a proper name.

138.7-16 Now, since it has been said that you are my twin and true companion, examine yourself, and learn who you are, in what way you exist, and how you will come to be. Since you will be called my brother, it is not fitting that you be ignorant of yourself. And I know that you have understood, because you had already understood that I am the knowledge of the truth. So while you accompany me, although you are uncomprehending, you have (in fact) already come to know, and you will be called ‘the one who knows himself.’

In the *Book of Thomas* the character of Thomas exists less as a historical figure and more as a path to be followed by subsequent readers. In other words, the reader is to become a twin of Jesus by ‘knowing him/herself.’ In the subsequent Thomas literature Judas as a unique

⁵⁸⁰ Koester, H., “GNOMAI DIAPHOROI,” 133.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. Kloppenborg, J., *The Formation of Q*, 1-88; 263-328.

⁵⁸² Cf. Brown, R.E., *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), chapters one and two.

proper name decreases in favor of the titular name 'Thomas.' All of this suggests to me that the attribution of Judas Didymos Thomas to the textual tradition explored in chapter three was part of a broader (sometimes literary) technique in early Christianity to legitimize a particular tradition.

Koester reaches a similar conclusion, writing that "The Gospel of Thomas is the product of an autonomous tradition. Of this one may be sure. Put in the most general terms, it belongs to the same period of Christian writing that produced the canonical gospels. Of this, too, one may be confident. As such, it stands as a relatively new and independent witness to the complex and obscure period of Christian origins."⁵⁸³ It seems that whoever this Judas was (if he existed) he was a popular hero and/or authority in the Osrhoëne region of Syria. Whether he was recognized as an overseer or 'bishop' is impossible to determine based on our fragmentary evidence. If he was indeed a historical person rather than literary creation, then it would be correct in recognizing him as the 'earliest' apostle to the Osrhoëne.

This view would, then, challenge the tradition put forward in the *Doctrine of Addai*.⁵⁸⁴ There we learned that Thomas sent another, one Addai or Thaddeus. But, if *Thomas* is to be considered our earliest tradition, then it seems Judas Thomas is the one that first came to Syria. For Koester, *Thomas* represents the earliest form of Christianity in the Osrhoëne. This offers a path between W. Bauer's thesis that Christianity in the Osrhoëne was 'heretical' rather than 'Orthodox' and the traditional story presented by Eusebius and the *Doctrine of Addai*. Koester further argues that Orthodoxy "did not get to Edessa until about A.D. 200. Their first perceptible figure is Palut, after whom the orthodox Christians, to their great

⁵⁸³ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 121.

⁵⁸⁴ See chapter one.

distress, were called the Palutians. Whether Palut was consecrated as 'bishop of Edessa by Serapion of Antioch remains doubtful.'⁵⁸⁵ Koester justifies this skepticism by declaring "This tradition only serves the purpose of connecting Palut's succession to Peter in Rome, which is historically improbable for many reasons" (which derive from his reading of W. Bauer's *Rechtgläubigkeit*).⁵⁸⁶ The *Gospel of Thomas*, then, is one of the missing links in Syrian Christian origins: it provides a bridge between Palestine and the Osrhoëne (though I doubt it was the only one⁵⁸⁷). The earlier strata (as detailed in the Appendix), which do not evince any specific Syrian characteristics, can be located along with the other emerging Gospel traditions (e.g. Q and Mark) in Palestine and the major redaction specifically in the Osrhoëne. However, I question Koester's dismissal of the traditions regarding Palut. While there may be 'myth-making' involved in Bishop Palut's declared connection with Bishop Serapion, I find no reason to completely dismiss the story. We simply don't have enough evidence to eliminate all aspects of these stories. Koester's description leads one to assume that *Thomas* is the 'official indigenous' form of Christianity in Syria. However, I would propose that the most that can be said about *Thomas* is that it is *one* of the earliest representations of Syrian Christianity -- the evidence simply does not permit a declaration beyond this cautious assertion. Thus, *Thomas* is both important to Syria and required for a full picture of the groups operating in first or second century Osrhoëne -- it cannot be ignored, nor can it be cast off in the dustbin of retroactive categorizations of heresy. *Thomas* belongs within the conversation of Syrian

⁵⁸⁵ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 142. See also chapter one of this dissertation.

⁵⁸⁶ Koester, H., "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI," 142, footnote 82.

⁵⁸⁷ The fact that Christian Syria has such diversity (as was reflected in chapter one) makes it difficult to maintain the master narrative of 'one apostle per region.' There were, rather, a number of different and novel Christian groups in Syria. The evidence in chapter one simply doesn't support a 'one apostle for all' position.

Christian origins, and Syriac scholars must take it seriously. It is neither 'gnostic' or 'heretical,' it is, rather, its own unique expression of Christian faith.

Social and Itinerant Radicalism in Thomas?

Beyond the question of the *Gospel of Thomas'* importance for the study of Syriac Christianity (which I will return to below), there remains the question of its character and ethos. In chapter three I proposed that the interpretive context for the major redaction was primarily the Genesis 1-3 narrative, yet I did not address how this may have been reflected in praxis. S. Patterson was one of the first to offer a picture of the praxis and social context behind the *Gospel of Thomas*. According to Patterson, "Speaking strictly in terms of its genre, the Gospel of Thomas does have prospects [for social contextual information]. It is a sayings collection. As such, there is an air of utility about it that allows one to expect a close relationship between it and its social context."⁵⁸⁸ In an effort to recover this social context, Patterson turns to the 'legal sayings' and 'community rules' expressed in the *Gospel of Thomas* because "Only legal sayings, or community rules, which presumably *address directly the behavior of the group that has coined and/or transmitted them*, are clear enough to yield up the sort of information about Thomas Christianity..."⁵⁸⁹ According to Patterson, the most typical forms of legal or community sayings are the following: 1) "The use of the imperative," 2) "Warnings" about both desirable and undesirable behavior, 3) "Rewards," such as 'not tasting death,' and 4) "the implicit indictment."⁵⁹⁰

With this methodology set, Patterson recovers seven primary characteristics of what he terms 'Thomas Christianity,' they are listed below:

⁵⁸⁸ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 122.

⁵⁸⁹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 125. Emphasis original.

⁵⁹⁰ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 126.

1) Wandering and Homelessness.⁵⁹¹

Patterson justifies this first point by referencing *Thomas* 42: “Be passers-by.” He declares that “The meaning of this saying is not illusive; it simply enjoins the reader/hearer to become one who ‘passes by,’ who does not stand in one place. The imperative here is to “Become itinerants.”⁵⁹² Another ‘legal’ saying that Patterson uses to justify his proposal that Thomas Christianity encouraged wandering and homelessness is *Thomas* 14.2: “And whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.”⁵⁹³ R. Uro notes, likewise, that “Unlike Q’s mission charge, the cluster of saying in *Thomas* is not a set of instructions about wandering from house to house without equipment, but a thematic unit focusing on the value of such religious practices as fasting, praying, almsgiving, and purity rules.”⁵⁹⁴ Patterson also appeals to one Thomasine ‘wisdom saying’ that might also reflect homelessness for Thomas Christians: 86. Jesus said: “[The foxes have] their dens and the birds have their nests, but the son of man has no place to lay down his head and rest.”

2) Cutting Family Ties.⁵⁹⁵

There are two ‘legal’ sayings that Patterson uses to support this characteristic: *Thomas* 55 and 101:

55.1 Jesus said: “Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot be a disciple of mine.”

⁵⁹¹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 128-131.

⁵⁹² Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 131.

⁵⁹³ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 131. Translation mine.

⁵⁹⁴ Risto, U., “The Social World of the *Gospel of Thomas*,” 19-38; 25, in: Asgeirsson, J.M., A.D. DeConick, and R. Uro, Eds., *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁵⁹⁵ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 134-137.

55.2 And whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and carry his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.

101.1 Jesus said: "Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother in the same way I do, cannot be a [disciple] of mine."

101.2 And whoever does not love his father and his mother in the same way I do, cannot be a disciple of mine.

101.3 For my mother [birthed my body], but my true [mother] gave me life.

Patterson also claims that *Thomas* 99 reflects these two 'legal' sayings⁵⁹⁶:

99. The disciples said to him: "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."

He said to them: "Those who do the will of my Father, they are my brothers and my mother. They are (truly) the ones who enter the kingdom of my Father."

Patterson concludes from these three sayings that "Thomas Christians see themselves as familiar in their relatedness to one another, replacing original family ties with new familial bonds based upon a common code of conduct."⁵⁹⁷ He further suggests, based on *Thomas* 31,⁵⁹⁸ that within this itinerancy model "It is unlikely that Thomas Christians would have been welcomed as heroes and heroines at home after having made such a decision."⁵⁹⁹ Beyond these 'legal' and 'wisdom' sayings, Patterson introduced two other sayings that supported his thesis: *Thomas* 105 and 16.⁶⁰⁰

3) Willful Poverty and Begging.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁶ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 135.

⁵⁹⁷ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 135.

⁵⁹⁸ 31. Jesus said: "No prophet is accepted in his own village; no physician heals those who know him."

⁵⁹⁹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 135.

⁶⁰⁰ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 136-137.

16.1 Jesus said: "Perhaps people think that it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world. But they do not know that is rebellion that I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, war!"

16.2 For there will be five within a household: three against two, and two against three -- father against son, and son against father.

105. Jesus said: "Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!"

⁶⁰¹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 137-140.

Patterson appeals to the saying in *Thomas* 14.2 to justify this characteristic of 'Thomas Christianity.' He argues that "These instructions are quite simple: one performs a service (care for the sick), and then takes what comes."⁶⁰² This also recalls J.D. Crossan's notion of 'open commensality' in his reconstruction of the historical Jesus' program.⁶⁰³ Patterson also connects these instructions to itinerancy. He argues that "While [*Thomas* 14.2] addresses itself to the beggars, Thom[as] [100.1] is aimed at their potential supporters"⁶⁰⁴:

100. They showed Jesus a coin and said to him: "Caesar's people demand taxes from us." He said to them: "Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, (but) give God what is God's." And give me what is mine.

According to Patterson, "With this sort of policy on making a living, it is obvious that the Thomas movement was not out to get rich. On the contrary, its members were called upon to be willfully impoverished"⁶⁰⁵: 95. Jesus said: "If you have money, do not lend it at interest. Rather, lend it to someone who won't pay you back." Patterson also uses the following sayings to muster support for his itinerant thesis: *Thomas* 54, 63, 64, 65. He also considers the parables in *Thomas* 76, 107, and 8 as evidence of a related "motif of willful poverty."⁶⁰⁶

4) Relativizing Piety and Purity.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰² Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 137.

⁶⁰³ Crossan, J.D., *The Historical Jesus*, chapter 13.

⁶⁰⁴ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 137.

⁶⁰⁵ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 138.

⁶⁰⁶ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 143. Patterson claims that "These three parables have one thing in common: their characters all place the pursuit of one prized thing over the everyday common sense involved in making a living." (*Ibid.*, 145).

⁶⁰⁷ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 147-148.

Patterson appeals to the controversial sayings against prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in *Thomas* 14.1 to support this proposal. Additionally, he appeals to the Sabbath saying in *Thomas* 27 and the saying relativizing the importance of the 'prophets' in *Thomas* 52.

5) The Deprecation of Officialdom.⁶⁰⁸

For this point, Patterson uses the parody of Caesar's money and taxes in *Thomas* 100 and the proclamation against a house, or Temple in *Thomas* 71. In contrast to DeConick and Quispel, Patterson argues that there is no "eschatological end time in view [in *Thomas*], which could absorb the saying [*Thomas* 71] into its apocalyptic mythology (cf. Mark 13:2). In *Thomas*, one is left with the Temple as a Jerusalem institution, whose deconstruction the *Thomas* movement perhaps applauds with this familiar saying."⁶⁰⁹

6) Minimal Organization.⁶¹⁰

Here Patterson appeals to the saying involving James in *Thomas* 12, the saying about becoming an alone one (MONOXOC) in *Thomas* 49, and *Thomas* 30.

7) Women Disciples in *Thomas* acting as 'men'.⁶¹¹

In this final point Patterson appeals to the controversial dialogue in *Thomas* 114 with Peter and Jesus about Mary's fitness for the Kingdom as well as the complex in *Thomas* 79:

79.1 A woman in the crowd said to him: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you."

He said to her: "Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it."

79.2 For there will be days when you will say: 'Blessed is the womb that has not conceived, and the breasts which have not given milk.'

⁶⁰⁸ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 148-150.

⁶⁰⁹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 149-150.

⁶¹⁰ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 151-153.

⁶¹¹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 154-155.

Within an ascetic context, Patterson argues that:

Although the final beatitude speaks of virgins (presumably virgins within the Thomas group), it speaks of the virginal state in a rather roundabout way. That is, what seems to be important is not abstinence from intercourse as the sign or basis of one's virginal status. Rather, the beatitude speaks specifically about the functions of the female body, as though the highest state to which a woman might aspire would be one in which her body did not function as a female body -- she "becomes male."⁶¹²

In Patterson's interpretation, then, women become like men by becoming virgins and acting as men. This he thinks is the result of the itinerant lifestyle described in *Thomas* 14.2 and 42 and the conditions along the ancient roads: "It would have been difficult for a woman to live the itinerant life unmolested by the various characters inhabiting highway and byway. Disguise as a man would have offered at least some protection from these dangers."⁶¹³

Patterson concludes from these seven characteristics the following:

Thomas Christianity positioned itself over against the world, and in so doing rejected the world and its standards in every way. Theologically, this anticosmic ideology expressed itself in the gnosticizing proclivity of the Gospel of Thomas. Sociologically, it expressed itself as a way of living in but not of the world. The world values security of house and home, of family, and of means; those in the Thomas movement rejected it. The world values engagement in traditional piety, and respect for authority; Thomas Christians did not. Their itinerant mode of existing in the world represented the Thomas Christians' radical protest against the world.⁶¹⁴

The most significant weakness in Patterson's argument results from his failure to distinguish between the different layers operating within *Thomas*.⁶¹⁵ Patterson too often searches for *Jesus*' perceived meaning while ignoring the way that the major redactor *uses* these sayings to mean *new* things. The *Gospel of Thomas* does not preserve the historical Jesus;

⁶¹² Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 155.

⁶¹³ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 155.

⁶¹⁴ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 156-157.

⁶¹⁵ I have tried to show this in the Appendix to this dissertation.

rather, it uses the sayings of Jesus in novel ways. Because Patterson fits many of the Thomasine saying into G. Theissen's 'itinerancy' metanarrative for Christian beginnings, certain sayings are privileged and emphasized above others (i.e. *Thomas* 14.2 and 42, especially). Patterson makes this commitment to Thiessen's theory explicit when he proposes "A social description of the Gospel of Thomas strengthens Theissen's thesis that the Jesus movement was at least partly shaped by the prominent role played in its early development by wandering radicals."⁶¹⁶ However, beyond *Thomas* 14.2, and maybe *Thomas* 42, there is very little speaking to an itinerant way of life in the major redaction, as outlined in chapter three. I would argue, on the other hand, that *Thomas'* written status presumes some form of settled existence. Moreover, in my reconstruction of the earlier strata in the Appendix to this dissertation, both of these sayings derive from earlier strata, and thus should not be used, in my opinion, to characterize the later 'Thomas Christians' responsible for the major redaction. This distinction highlights a significant difference between Patterson's reconstruction of the 'Thomas Christians' and my own: I do not think the earlier three strata recovered in chapter three should be used as the *primary* basis from which to reconstruct what has been termed 'Thomas Christianity' by Patterson. I think rather, as will be discussed below, that the initial strata of *Thomas* (as outlined in the Appendix) was nothing more than performative chreia collections, whereas the major redaction became something quite different -- it became a Gospel by Judas Thomas, not just an anonymous collection of sayings.

Whereas Patterson uses the complete *Gospel of Thomas* to contextualize the Thomas community's social situation, I use primarily the material I designated as the major redactional material. If we do not distinguish between the different strata operating in *Thomas* we fail to

⁶¹⁶ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 170.

appreciate the novel moves made by the major (and final) redactor of the tradition; and, as chapter three showed, it is the major redactional material that has the most in common with the later documents associated with the *Gospel of Thomas* (i.e. the *Book of Thomas*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, and the *Acts of Thomas*), not the preceding strata as outlined in the Appendix. Thus, I think it is best to use the major redactional material to characterize *Thomas'* contribution to Syrian Christian beginnings. On the other hand, it is important to use the earlier strata for the broader and earlier question of Christian beginnings. Because Patterson's work is invested in the question of the historical Jesus, his pursuit of Jesus' 'original' meaning -- or at least an earlier meaning -- leads him to characterize the social situation of the 'Thomas Christians' according to the perceived interpretive background of each of these sayings. The problem with this, however, is twofold: first, the major redaction may not care or be familiar with what earlier Gospels did with Jesus' sayings, or how they interpreted them; second, the major redactor is clearly interested in doing something *new* with these received sayings of Jesus. In other words, the major redactor and his or her community were keen on *re*interpreting the Jesus tradition according to their Genesis 1 oriented hermeneutic. The earlier strata may have been composed *before* the Q and Mark 'mission speech,'⁶¹⁷ so to use such to contextualize *Thomas* proves problematic in my estimation. Where Patterson concentrates on interpretations *within* the sayings and their place in other Gospels, I have in the Appendix elected to concentrate on *how* these sayings are *used* within the new rhetorical progression and sequence of the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the major redaction specifically. In addition to the Genesis 1-3

⁶¹⁷ On this point Patterson writes: "Theissen relates the Q version of this saying (Matt 8:20//Luke 9:58) to the phenomenon of itinerancy behind the synoptic tradition; I see no reason to suppose that it has any other significance in Thomas. It is a lament that befits the plight of the wandering itinerant, whose request for a place to stay has been turned down or whose welcome in the home of a host has expired." (Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 134).

contextual matrix, I refer also to the later texts within the Thomasine trajectory as outlined in chapter three in the effort to reconstruct the early ‘Thomas Christians’ of Syria. I will return to this point below when I offer my own characterization of the community behind the major redaction.

Because the rhetorical context of the major redaction thoroughly changes many aspects of the sayings from the earlier strata (as outlined in the Appendix), a number of Patterson’s characteristics listed above can be challenged. Whereas *Thomas* 14.2 may have been used within Q and Mark as a ‘mission speech,’ in the complete *Gospel of Thomas* it operates as an ‘example’ for the scandalous sayings that precede it in *Thomas* 14.1:

- Question: <<6.1 His disciples asked him: “Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?”>>
- Contrary: 14.1 Jesus said to them: “If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits.”
- Example: 14.2 *And* whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.
- Rationale: 14.3 *For*, what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which issues from your mouth will pollute you.

Likewise, in *Thomas* 14.3 we have a ‘rationale’ for both the scandalous behavior espoused in *Thomas* 14.1 and the ‘example’ offered in *Thomas* 14.2. Whatever the case, it seems quite clear to me that *Thomas* 14.2 is *not* operating in the same manner that it does in Mark or Q.⁶¹⁸ While this saying is part of what G. Theissen called the “Sending Out” narratives, in *Thomas* this saying is not placed in such a context. This saying, in the initial chreia collection, justifies eating habits, but it does not necessarily reflect a way of life practiced by Thomas Christians --

⁶¹⁸ Q 10:3-6, 9-11, 16 and Mark 6: 8-15.

though it might have. However, I do not want to suggest that none of the earlier sayings influenced the praxis of the later Thomas Christians in Syria. I just want to question the applicability of broader metanarratives for Christian beginnings for the evolution of the Thomas tradition. In my methodology for recovering the *latest* community behind the *Gospel of Thomas*, I concentrate almost solely on the major redactional material and the paralleled material in the *Book of Thomas* and the *Acts of Thomas*.

Patterson concludes his social historical characterization of the 'Thomas Christians' with two primary points:

- 1) "[T]hat Thomas Christianity by a socially radical ethos, which included much time on the road, if not a thoroughly itinerant life style altogether, severance of family ties and responsibilities, a kind of willful poverty which required the Thomas Christian to beg for food and shelter, a relativizing of codes of purity and conventions of piety, including prayer, fasting, and the giving of alms, a certain cynical attitude over against the powers that be (emperors, kings, and the like), a predilection for minimal organization and openness to participation by women in the groups. Thus, these social radicals are not altogether unlike the wandering charismatics that Theissen has argued propagated the sayings tradition in general."
- 2) That one may "detect a shift in focus away from wandering radicalism toward a more conventional, settled way of life, in Thomas one may detect no such shift, the focus remaining on the socially radical ethos which characterized the synoptic side of things only in an earlier phase of its development."⁶¹⁹

The Performative (and Ascetical) Dimension

Despite the fact that much of G. Theissen's theory of 'wandering itinerants' has been, I think, thoroughly critiqued and challenged,⁶²⁰ Patterson still believes that most of his social contextual theory for the *Gospel of Thomas* remains valid. He acknowledges that while Theissen's broader understanding of Christian itinerancy has been successfully challenged, the

⁶¹⁹ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 171.

⁶²⁰ See especially: Mack, B.L., "The Kingdom that Didn't Come," *SBL Seminar Papers*, (1988), SBLSP 27, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 620-621; and J.S. Kloppenborg, "Literary Convention, Self-Evidence, and the Social History of the Q People," in *Early Christianity, Q, and Jesus, Semeia* 35, eds., J.S. Kloppenborg, L. Vaage (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

presence of itinerant radicals has not. In Patterson's words, "I thought, and still think I see itinerancy in *Thomas* not just because of my reading of *Gos. Thom.* 42, 12, or 14, but because of the way its trajectory stands in relation to other trajectories running through the last decades of the first century."⁶²¹ Patterson, however, does acknowledge, in response to Mack's work in "The Kingdom that Didn't Come," that "the notion of a 'mission' in the early Jesus tradition seems to be rooted in the specific apocalyptic urgency of Q, which may not have characterized the whole of early Christianity."⁶²² Patterson also admits "This is borne out by an examination of the *Thomas* parallels to the 'mission discourse' in Q. *Gos. Thom.* 14 (=Q 10:8-9) offers no hint of a mission."⁶²³ However, these critiques should not diminish the important contribution that Patterson's work has made to *Thomas* studies. While Patterson has tempered his commitment to Theissen's thesis, he has discovered an intriguing new avenue for contextualizing the *Gospel of Thomas* in conversation with his earlier theories of itinerant radicals in *Thomas*. In his article, "Askesis and the Early Jesus Tradition,"⁶²⁴ Patterson employs R. Valantasis' theories regarding performance and asceticism in an effort to contextualize the *Gospel of Thomas*. For Patterson, following Valantasis, asceticism commanded a particular performative dimension. According to Valantasis this performative aspect of asceticism was "intended to inaugurate a new subjectivity, different social relations, and an alternative symbolic universe."⁶²⁵ Patterson now thinks that "Gaining a new sense of self, a new 'subjectivity,' is at the heart of the *Gospel of*

⁶²¹ Patterson, S., "The *Gospel of Thomas* and Christian Beginnings," 4-5.

⁶²² Patterson, S., "The *Gospel of Thomas* and Christian Beginnings," 5.

⁶²³ Patterson, S., "The *Gospel of Thomas* and Christian Beginnings," 5.

⁶²⁴ Patterson, S., "Askesis and the Early Jesus Tradition," in: L. Vaage and V. Wimbush, eds., *Asceticism and the New Testament* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁶²⁵ Valantasis, R., "Constructions of Power in Asceticism," *JAAR* 63 (1995), 755-821; 797. See also: R. Valantasis, "Is the *Gospel of Thomas* Ascetical? Revisiting an Old Problem with a New Theory," *J ECS* 7 (1999), 55-81.

Thomas. And yet this centering on the self is not a private thing. It involves interrupting and creating new social relations; it has a public side. As such, the practices and attitudes promulgated in its sayings bring one into a *performative* mode."⁶²⁶ In this manner Patterson re-characterized his earlier thesis of 'itinerant radicals' by making them 'wandering itinerant ascetical sages.' He offers this justification for this move:

The sage must hold forth -- in the synagogue, in the agora, at table. And these performances of word must be followed by deeds to match: more performance in *praxis*. And what does one expect from a performance in *praxis*? An ancient expects a performer to be engaged in *mimesis*, in the *imitation* of life -- life not as it is, but better than it is (comedy), or worse (tragedy)... An ascetic imitates life, not as it is, but as it might be in some imagined ideal. This describes, in my view, what the Thomasine folk were about. *Those who cultivated the traditions of the Gospel of Thomas were not leaders of a movement with a mission. They were performers of an existence and a self-understanding as an ideal. "When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father" (Gos. Thom. 3:4).*⁶²⁷

Patterson's proposal that the *Gospel of Thomas* was not intended to lead a movement or mission is major advancement in *Thomas* studies. This allows, I think, future scholarship to appreciate the text without having to make it do too much.⁶²⁸ If we begin our exploration of *Thomas* with the belief that it will significantly change the study of Christian beginnings, then we *will* make it do something very significant. However, if we follow Patterson's proposal that *Thomas* was not trying to challenge 'Christianity' or lead a new 'movement' or 'mission,' then I think a number of new avenues can be opened for future studies. While much of Patterson's new theory about 'performative asceticism' derives from Valantasis' important work, Patterson remains nearly alone in proposing a community behind the *Gospel of Thomas* that

⁶²⁶ Patterson, S., "The *Gospel of Thomas* and Christian Beginnings," 6.

⁶²⁷ Patterson, S., "The *Gospel of Thomas* and Christian Beginnings," 6-7. Emphasis mine.

⁶²⁸ In the sense of solving the problem of Christian origins.

was not interested in engaging with or re-writing Christian beginnings. Valantasis, in my opinion, retains this proclivity to see in *Thomas* a response to the meta-narrative of Christian beginnings -- he argues that:

Three different and conflicting interpretations of the Christian's individual life were being promulgated and competing [in the first century]. Three different and alternative Christian identities emerged at the same time as a last attempt at renewal before the hierarchical structures of the church became dominant. The Gospel of Thomas promotes an engages and immediate experience of the living Jesus gained through the interpretation of the sayings (Saying 1). The Gospel of John promotes a similar Christian person but modified by reference to the passion and death of Jesus: these revelations connect with the death and resurrection of Jesus... Ignatius promotes a Christian person in imitation of the life (in church) of Jesus and participation in his death. Thomas' kind of person alone hearkens to the days of immediate presence of Jesus without any need to engage in imitation either of Jesus or of the disciples; John and Ignatius work with the passion and attempt to reduplicate the experiential basis of that immediacy (John through the discourses; Ignatius through the participation in the death of Jesus through martyrdom), but Thomas is satisfied simply to present the interpretation of the sayings as the only necessary experience.⁶²⁹

There are three primary issues with this presentation:

- 1) We do not know (and cannot know) to what extent individuals in these disparate early Jesus associations were privy to an 'immediate experience' of Jesus. Thus, I do not think it is fair to characterize one group's immediacy of experience in contrast to another. Why is Ignatius' experience any less immediate than the *Gospel of Thomas*'?
- 2) The formulation above presumes that *Thomas* is reacting to other communities. However, this we cannot assume. *John* and *Thomas*, for example, have a number of parallels, but this need not require us to assume that the two communities were in competition, or that these two 'communities' were aware of each other. Parallels do not necessarily equate conversation.

⁶²⁹ Valantasis, R., *The Gospel of Thomas* (London: Routledge, 1997), 21-22.

3) Valantasis' decision to pit *Thomas*' presentation against Ignatius and *John* requires further justification. There is a strong chance that these other communities were either irrelevant or unknown to *Thomas*. We must resist seeing *Thomas* as a 'competing' text with the master-narrative of Christian beginnings.

Valantasis work proves immensely helpful in shifting the focus away from the artificial polarity between 'encratism' and 'gnosticism' by focusing on the positive aspects of the ascetical life:

My perspective on asceticism looks not only at the negative performances (rejecting wealth or sexuality), but primarily toward the positive articulation of the new subjectivity that the gospel presents ("becoming one," for example). This positive perspective promotes a constructive reading of the text, so that all performances (whether negative or positive) are interpreted in the context of the larger project of creating an alternative identity within a larger and more dominant religious environment.⁶⁵⁰

This contribution by Valantasis has helped unshackle *Thomas* from its defensive posture. It can now, thanks to him and others, be interpreted as a text that can present its own case without having to justify it.

The Performative, Compositional, and Educational Dimension

A. DeConick's and J. Asgeirsson's work on the chreia elaborative aspects of the *Gospel of Thomas* have added an important component to the performative dimension of *Thomas*: the *compositional process*. For DeConick, this compositional process was *performative, compositional, and educational*:

Part of this compositional process, Theon [of Alexandria] reveals, is that it involved an oral dimension. Theon's first exercise with the chreia is "the recitation." The teacher would present a speech or action gleaned from oral or written sources, and his students would write it down "clearly in the same

⁶⁵⁰ Valantasis, R., *The Gospel of Thomas*, 23.

words or in others as well.”⁶³¹ They were encouraged to write down as much or as little verbatim from the speech as they saw fit. The point of the exercise was for the students to develop clarity of argument, not verbatim repetition. Certainly their arguments would contain a significant repetition of the teacher’s speech, but this would appear in varied contexts in order to make the old traditions meet the needs of a new day or persuade a different audience.⁶³²

This context, relative to my tentative outline of the chreia elaborative techniques in *Thomas* in the Appendix to this dissertation, proves helpful in reproducing a context for the production of the *Gospel of Thomas*. However, we are left wondering where and in what situation this school/educational setting occurred. Patterson too considers an educational context for the *Gospel of Thomas*: “the Gospel of Thomas as a sayings collection may be considered a literary toolbox, or perhaps a quiver full of arrows to be drawn forth and used when the proper situation should arise, be it in the instruction of new recruits or parry and jab of philosophical debate. *The place for the sayings collection was in the classroom or on the street; this was its Sitz im Leben.*”⁶³³ However, Patterson’s conception of the ‘classroom’ dimension of the compositional process behind *Thomas* is not one of instruction in the *progymnasmata* method of chreia elaboration, but the “instruction of new recruits,” which, again, evokes a commitment to a particular ‘mission.’ DeConick makes a similar move when she attributes this instructional setting to the purposes of the ‘Jerusalem mission’: “It seems very likely that this collection of speeches was used by the Jerusalem mission between 30-50 CE as it labored to convert people to the faith especially in Palestine and its environments (cf. Acts 10-11:18; 15:1, 22, 27, 32).”⁶³⁴ DeConick also thinks that “it is quite conceivable that the Kernel gospel [as recovered

⁶³¹ From Hock and O’Neil, *The Progymnasmata*, 95. See chapter three.

⁶³² DeConick, A.D., “On the Brink of Apocalypse: A Preliminary Examination of the Earliest Speeches in the *Gospel of Thomas*,” in: J.M. Asgeirsson, A. DeConick, R. Uro, eds., *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity*, 101.

⁶³³ Patterson, S., *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 120. Emphasis mine.

⁶³⁴ DeConick, A.D., “On the Brink of Apocalypse,” 117.

in her book *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*] is a representative example of one of these old speech books from Jerusalem.”⁶³⁵ This, however, pays far too much credence to the master-narrative put forward in the *Acts of the Apostles* -- it must be remembered that *Thomas* may be either unaware or unconcerned with developments in the broader early Christian movement. So, while, both Patterson and DeConick introduced the possible educational context for the *Gospel of Thomas*, both used the theory for a particular ‘mission’ within the broader Christian world.

While the educational and school context helps explain the chreia elaborative process within the *Thomas* tradition explored in the Appendix, the mechanism or procedure by which *Thomas* came to be written down remains uncertain. W. Arnal places what he considers the earliest stratum of *Thomas* in conversation with the first stratum of Q (referred to as ‘Q₁’) in his article, “The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels”⁶³⁶ Following the work of J. Kloppenborg, Arnal locates both the first stratum of *Thomas* and the first stratum of Q within the context of first century ‘village scribes.’ Kloppenborg presents the case for the village scribes being responsible for the production of Q₁ as follows:

If one asks, who would be in a position to frame the Sayings Gospel as it has been framed, the answer would appear to be village and town notaries and scribes. These were the local embodiment of literary technology, and it was they who in the life of the village were most keenly aware of many of the matters that preoccupy Q -- debt (Q 6:30; 11:4; 12:58-59), divorce (Q 16:18), lawsuits (6:29); for it was they who wrote loans contracts, petitions, and bills of divorce. The fact that Q₁ is framed as an instruction -- a typical scribal genre -- and

⁶³⁵ DeConick, A.D., “On the Brink of Apocalypse,” 117.

⁶³⁶ Arnal, W. E., “The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels,” *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 88 No. 4 (1995), 471-494.

reflects the interest of scribes in the *process* as well as the content of learning is also best explained on the supposition that Q¹ is the product of scribes.⁶³⁷

First, it should be self-evident that insofar as Q represents a written document, it is the product of scribal technology; who besides scribes has the ability to compose it this way and who would have chosen a typically scribal genre? Second, Q does in fact betray a number of features characteristic of scribes, as has been indicated above: interest in the process of as well as the content of instruction. Finally, scribes did not uniformly serve the interests of the ruling elite. There is ample evidence from Egypt to indicate the presence of a variety of scribes, of varying educational levels, in towns and villages, some serving in the apparatus of the provincial administration and others functioning as freelance professionals. The *κωμογράφος* (village scribe) was concerned with tax and census matters. But the writing of loan and lease agreements presupposed the existence of private professionals prepared to assist in these transactions... There is no reason at all to suppose that this sector was uniformly aligned with the ruling class against the poor or that this sector functioned exclusively as retainers of the elite. Q¹ reflects the technology and interests of these private professionals.⁶³⁸

Arnal concludes his study of the relationship between the earliest strata of Q and *Thomas* as follows:

the Gospel of Thomas and Q share the following social features: literacy and a scribal mentality, a probable setting in village or town life, a group organization that did not entirely withdraw from the larger world of which it constituted a part, and a group mentality characterized more than anything else by the adoption of a particular understanding of the world and a corresponding ethic. Moreover, both documents were composed in a context in which increased exploitation of the countryside and peasantry by the urban elites contributed to considerable social disintegration and economic distress (such as debt, dispossession, tenancy, impoverishment and hunger). Both groups respond to this crisis by adopting a highly critical stance toward ordinary social conventions and political structures, a critique of wealth, an inversion of normal values, and a rejection or critique of urban-based religious institutions.

I think these common features account for the Gospel of Thomas's and Q's similarities more than their mere recourse to similar sources. Their use of a common genre reflects both the scribal background of the documents' tradents and their concern with the assimilation of an ethos over other types of group identity. The presence of similar theological motifs the Kingdom as inversionary of accepted standards; the emphasis on radical behavior; the critique, implicit

⁶³⁷ Kloppenborg, J.S., *Excavating Q*, 200.

⁶³⁸ Kloppenborg, J.S., *Excavating Q*, 200-201.

or explicit, of mainstream Jewish expressions of piety; the emphasis on God's beneficence over against the maleficence of political and social structures can be explained on the basis of these groups' response to very similar conflict-ridden situations. Each recommends a slightly different response, but both contain common motifs that derive from a shared critical stance toward the distressing socioeconomic changes perceived to be taking place. This social and ideological common ground also helps to account for the appearance of parallel material in the works. It is easier to imagine the two groups sharing a large vault of common oral tradition; their common social locations would have fostered not only the actual physical contact necessary for such transmission, but also the common ideological and symbolic comprehensibility of the other's traditions.⁶³⁹

While village scribes would certainly have the technology and skill required to record the sayings of Jesus in both *Q* and *Thomas*, I wonder whether the 'school' setting could serve just as well. In chapter three we found an experimental and playful juxtaposition of sayings with the goal of creating arguments, elaborating sayings, and incorporating new sayings material. I think this elaborative and experimental apparatus bears the marks of a school setting. However, we do not yet know on what stage this 'school setting' occurred. From Koester we learned of the specifically Syrian provenance of the *Gospel of Thomas*, from Patterson and Valantasis we learned of the apparent ascetical tendencies in *Thomas* as well as its performative dimension, from DeConick and Asgeirsson we learned of the chreia elaborative and possible educational context for the Gospel, and from Pagels and Davies we learned of Genesis 1-3 themes operating in the major redaction, but we remain without the occasion for all of this to take place. In other words, we have much of the context, but no arena or stage from which this process of composition might have occurred. We have for the major redaction performative asceticism, performative chreia elaboration, Genesis 1-3 themes, and a Syrian provenance, but no coherent context where all of this could have come together. This is where the work of one of my advisors, Hal Taussig, has proved most insightful. With

⁶³⁹ Arnal, W., "The Rhetoric of Marginality," 491-492.

Taussig's important work on ancient Greco-Roman meals, we are finally provided with what I believe is the context for the composition and development of the *Thomas* tradition, and it is to this new stage and context that I will now turn.

The Ancient Greco-Roman Meal as the Context for the Gospel of Thomas

In the previous sections of this chapter I have outlined the fragments of a particular praxis for the Thomas group, but now we must turn to the arena in which I think all of this came together. According to Taussig:

When people gathered for meals in first-century Mediterranean cultures, the event was laden with meaning. Meals were highly stylized occasions that carried significant social coding, identity formation, and meaning making. Participating in a meal entailed entering into a social dynamic that confirmed, challenged, and negotiated both who the group as a whole was and who the individuals within it were.⁶⁴⁰

I follow Taussig in using the word 'meal' to "denote the frequent occasion of people gathering from different residences to eat festively."⁶⁴¹ This was not just an occasion for eating, but a place of social construction and experimentation. Many of these 'meals' occurred within ancient associations. P. Harland offers the following topology for the different kinds of associations operating in the Greco-Roman world: "(1) household connections, (2) ethnic or geographic connections, (3) neighborhood connections, (4) occupational connections, and (5) cult or temple connections."⁶⁴² According to Taussig:

the terms synagogue, congregation, and association seem to have substantially overlapped in the Hellenistic world. Certainly within early Christian groups,

⁶⁴⁰ Taussig, H., *In the Beginning was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 22.

⁶⁴¹ Taussig, H., *In the Beginning was the Meal*, 22.

⁶⁴² Harland, P., *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), quoted in H. Taussig, *In the Beginning was the Meal*, 90.

each of these notions seems to have been in play... Whatever the missing nuances in the comparison of early churches and associations may be, it should be clear that this comparison provides a much more solid base for thinking about the provenance of early Christian congregations than any of the other, relatively crude and simplistic proposed origins outlined... Only uncritical thinking with a strong loyalty to the master narrative of Christian origins can entertain that churches appeared *ex nihilo* in the first century or as a commission (which does not exist in the New Testament) by Jesus.

Taussig outlines five elements of the ancient Greco-Roman meal, which are listed as follows:

1. The reclining of (more or less) all participants while eating and drinking together for several hours in the evening.
2. The order of a supper (*deipnon*) of eating, followed by an extended time (*symposion*) of drinking, conversation, and/or performance.
3. The marking of the transition from *deipnon* to *symposion* with a ceremonial libation.
4. The leadership by a “president” (*symposiarch* in Greek) of the meal, a person not always the same, and sometimes a role that was contingent or disputed.
5. A variety of marginal personages, often including servants, uninvited guests, “entertainers,” and dogs.⁶⁴³

However, what is most important for my purposes, is Taussig’s proposal that the meal represented the occasion for both education and *chreia* elaborative exercises. This, I will argue below, is the context for the *chreia* elaborative process outlined in chapter three. Because it is absolutely essential to the social context of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Syrian major redaction, I will quote his insightful remarks at length:

The classical literature on the *symposion* portrayed this extended meal setting as a school setting. That is, although the image of the meal as a school as counterintuitive for twenty-first-century sensibilities, the meal was a primary school location for the ancient Mediterranean. Once this setting is understood, the enormous creative potential for such learning comes into view. The combination of the structured learning exercises of the *Progymnasmata* and the lively repartee of the symposial atmosphere certainly allowed both a framework for composition and an improvisational and elaborative creativity, as the *chreiae* were reworked into longer units. When applied to gospel material, it becomes quite clear that the meals provided the conventional location for the communal and school-like composition of subgospel units.

⁶⁴³ Each of the above elements are direct quotes from Taussig, H., *In the Beginning was the Meal*, 68-69.

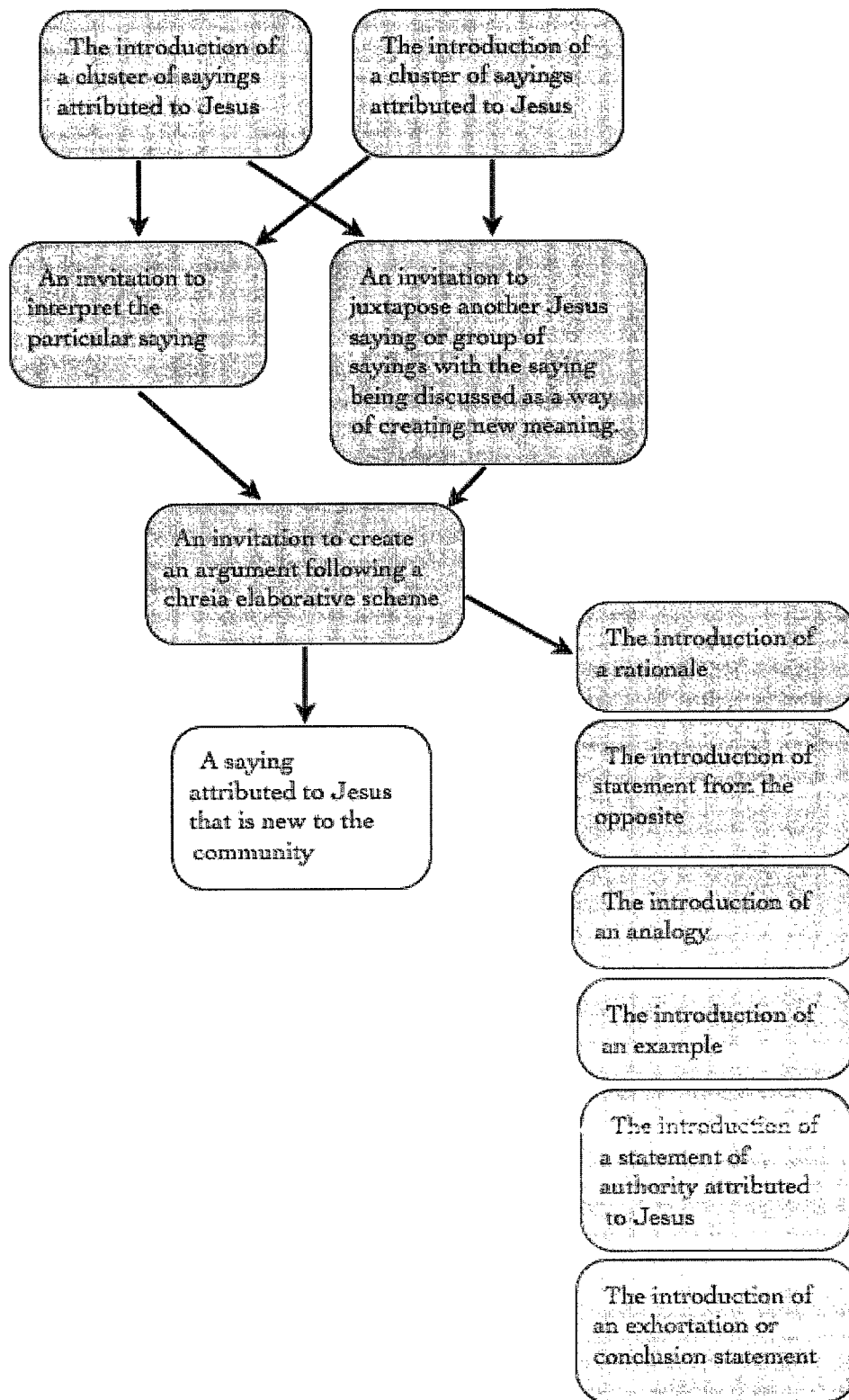
So, for instance, the Matthean elaboration of the Beatitudes, in which four blessings drawn from Q become nine, would have been a classic exercise/interaction at the early Christian meals where schools met. Similarly, the ways various conflict stories became vehicles for a clever *chreia*-like saying (e.g. Mark 2:15-17 is a story of a conflict of Jesus and the Pharisees *at a meal* in which the conflict is resolved with the *chreia* about how the sick, not those who are well, need a physician) would have happened organically within a “school” meal following the *Progymnasmata* structure and carrying the meal energy of social experimentation. That is, the *symposion* would have begun with the *chreia* about the physician, the well, and the sick; and then those reclining would have elaborated -- per the *Progymnasmata*-prescribed exercises -- the *chreia* into the story about the meal controversy.

This same pattern also occurs less than a chapter later where a story of the healing of a man with a withered hand seems to have been elaborated out of first a *chreia* about the Sabbath being made for the humankind and the inverse, and a controversy story about picking grain (Mark 2:23-3:5). This elaborative process also could very well have been projected into units as long as Mark 4:1-33, the majority of which has been seen by many scholars as pregospel on parables and parabolic units.⁶⁴⁴

Taussig’s recent work on meals has provided the occasion for all of the points discussed above to come together. Here the educational, performative, and *chreia* elaborative find a stage. Could not the Greco-Roman meal make sense of the process detailed in chapter three? I think so. Taussig’s two examples above parallel the elaborative process observed in chapter three. What is also very important for the purposes of this dissertation in Taussig’s work is its detailed proposal that elaboration is not merely performative, but socially experimental. That is, the meal was the occasion where people experimented with new ways of living and associating together. The sayings often reflected these experimental values. Moreover, Taussig’s work teaches us that the elaborative process was a *communal project*. One can imagine a saying being presented to those gathered around a meal with an invitation to elaborate the

⁶⁴⁴ Taussig, H., *In the Beginning was the Meal*, 38-39. See also Hal Taussig’s piece, “Dealing under the Table: Ritual Negotiation of Women’s Power in the Syro-Phoenician Woman Pericope,” in: E.A. Castelli and H. Taussig, eds., *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

saying or perhaps introduce a new saying. Upon reflection I propose the following elaborative processes that might have occurred within such a setting:



This elaborative process could've taken place as a chreia elaborative *instructional* exercise or as a meaning-making exercise within a *ritual* setting (and perhaps both).

With a general outline of the meaning-making and elaborative process outlined above, I want to place the four strata proposed in the Appendix and chapter three within this context. In the first stratum, which I refer to as the 'chreia collection core' we have a record of one of the earliest sequences of the sayings of Jesus. Unlike the *Gospel of Mark* the chreia collection core of *Thomas* elaborates without a narrative context. In my opinion this suggests that the initial chreia collection core of *Thomas* is earlier than the Marcan sequence discussed by Taussig above. I offer this proposal because the first stratum of *Thomas* appears to be less developed than the sequences of sayings in Mark and because Mark appears to use a preexistent sequence of sayings and parables.⁶⁴⁵ The initial chreia collection core behind *Thomas*, then, seems to be somewhere between the mere recording of a series of remembered sayings and their later sequencing within a narrative structure. This would put the initial chreia core's composition sometime near the composition of Q's first stratum (ca. 50 C.E.⁶⁴⁶), if it existed.

What follows is a brief and tentative outline of the process by which *Thomas* may have been composed within the meal setting.

- 1) The introduction of an initial collection of Jesus sayings (or sayings attributed to Jesus) gathered from constituents of an association connected in some way with the figure of Jesus.

⁶⁴⁵ My advisor John Anthony McGuckin in conversation has proposed, likewise, that Mark may have used an earlier set of sayings material, which, for example, in Mark 4 may have been organized by the catchword 'seed' (i.e. Parable of the Sower, Parable of the Mustard Seed, Parable of the Seed Growing in Secret).

⁶⁴⁶ Kloppenborg, J.S., *Excavating Q*, especially chapters three and four.

- 2) A communal meaning-making project of sequencing these sayings according to theme, structure, and/or word. This may have occurred within an oral or scribal capacity, and perhaps within an educational context.
- 3) A communal sequencing of sayings according to the chreia elaborative processes detailed in the *progymnasmata*. This, again, may have occurred within an oral or scribal capacity, and perhaps within an educational setting.
- 4) A communal experimentation with different sequences against or within earlier sequences by the community.
- 5) A *written* account of one of these chreia elaborative sequences. *This would be the initial 'Chreia Collection Core' of Thomas outlined in the Appendix.*
- 6) Further exercises with one of the *written* chreia collections. These exercises would play *within* the different sequences put forward in one of the initial *written* chreia collections. *This would be the 'Expanded Chreia Collection' outlined in the Appendix.* Some of these expansions may have been from formerly independent sayings that the community became aware of from other Christian communities. On the other hand, some of these expansions may have been novel expansions not based on received Jesus material. In this sense, some of the examples and rationales inserted in this stage may not have been remembered as Jesus sayings *per se*, but were created *as* Jesus' sayings.
- 7) The integration of new sayings that entered from a different association connected also with Jesus. *This, for example, may be what the 'Judgment Redaction' was in the Appendix.*
- 8) The passing on of this *written* tradition to other Jesus associations.
- 9) Finally, the integration of a whole new set of sayings by a *new community* associated with Jesus. *This, in the case of the major redaction, would be a Syrian Jesus association connected with one*

such Judas Thomas, and interested in returning to the first creation in Genesis 1 (as detailed in chapter three).

Within this tentative proposal we can observe 1) a performative dimension, 2) a chreia elaborative dimension, 3) a possible educational setting, and 4) a ritual dimension. The performative dimension could be part of the 'entertainment' element of the meal; the chreia elaborative dimension may have been part of the general meal conversation around the figure of Jesus and his sayings; the educational setting may have taken place within a school setting where students learned how to compose arguments out of chreia collections; and the ritual dimension may have been where the elaborative aspect was joined with a ritual remembrance of Jesus through his 'living' sayings.

The meal setting was also place, according to Taussig, where the teachings of Jesus could be practiced within a controlled environment. In this sense, the meal was where the elaborative mode of discourse met with spiritual and social praxis. Indeed, the meal was the stage upon which the sayings of Jesus could be enacted. Taussig proposes that "the meals of early Christians (and other Hellenistic groups) appear as a series of bold social and spiritual experiments. They allowed early Christians to try out new behaviors in dialogue with their social visions."⁶⁴⁷ This is what I believe was happening behind the composition of the *Gospel of Thomas*. It would be wrong to distinguish between 'churches' and early Christian 'meals' -- this was the arena where early Jesus associations began.

⁶⁴⁷ Taussig, H., *In the Beginning was the Meal*, 54.

Genesis 1 as a Social and Religious Experiment

If the sayings of the different strata (as presented in the Appendix) reflect the “social and spiritual experiments” of the community behind the *Thomas* tradition, it should be possible to recover at least some fragments of the experimental vision of the community responsible for the major redaction. When one entered the meal setting of the Judas (Thomas) association in Syria, one entered the condition of the first creation in Genesis 1. The meal setting, in this sense, was the occasion for re-imagining what life was like in Genesis 1 and actually living as if in such a condition. The ritual space, then, was the place where the community drew near to God by acting as if they were in Eden.

As chapter three showed, this reentry into the Genesis 1 condition involved some novel interpretive moves, and, surely, some unique social experiments. The ritual and social experimental space of the meal setting provides a new interpretive framework for the *Gospel of Thomas* and Syrian Christian beginnings. To live in the first creation required a number of changes in the social fabric of ancient society. *Thomas* 22.3 preserves a description of the praxis of the first creation in Genesis 1:

22.3 Jesus said to them: “When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when you make the male and the female into a solitary one, so that the male is not male nor the female female. And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom].”

Those who participated in the Thomasine Genesis 1 setting were to cast aside any notion of gender distinction: this is marked by the ‘two-becoming-one,’ and the instruction to “make the male and the female into a solitary one, so that the male is not male nor the female female.” Within the meal setting it is possible that this was performed by not distinguishing or designating where women and men should recline. That this was socially ‘experimental’ is

indicated by the dialogue about Mary in *Thomas* 114. It seems that at some point in the group's history the place of women came into question. As discussed in chapter three, *Thomas* 114 serves to negotiate a place for women within the Thomas community, rather than oppose them. This question of women's place within the Christian (ascetic) community continued for some time and is reflected in the *Gospel of Mary* as exhibited in chapter four and the *Dialogue of the Savior*:

90. Judas said, "You have told us this out of the mind of truth. When we pray, how should we pray?"

91. The Lord said, "Pray in the place where there is no woman."

92. Matthew said, "'Pray in the place where there is no woman,' he tells us, meaning 'Destroy the works of womanhood,' not because there is any other manner of birth, but because they will cease giving birth."

93. Mary said, "They will never be obliterated."

It should be noted that this experimental aspect is not unique or unprecedented: Paul too was wrestling with the leadership and teaching roles of the women of (one of) the Corinthian communities.⁶⁴⁸ It seems also possible that children were admitted into the Thomas association because the group was to 'become children like Adam and Eve in the Garden' and because "the person old in days should not hesitate to ask a small child of *seven days* about the place of life" (*Thomas* 4.1). However, this talk of children may also have been purely metaphorical.

It seems clear from *Thomas* 60 and 11.2 that the Thomas group avoided meat at their meals. They would also, it appears, have avoided sexual contact, as they were to be the 'solitary' ones that entered the 'bridal chamber.' The major redaction's interest in overcoming the fleshly garments donned after the 'fall' and the exhortation to "fast from the world" in *Thomas* 27 suggests that the community practiced a form of asceticism. This asceticism was

⁶⁴⁸ Wire, A., *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction Through Paul's Rhetoric* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003). Cf. H. Taussig, *In the Beginning was the Meal*, 157-161.

enacted through the rejection of wealth, business, and usury. However, the notion of ‘fasting’ within the Thomas community proves, initially, more difficult to interpret. In *Thomas* 27.2 the community is instructed to ‘fast’ from the world, but in *Thomas* 14.1, they are instructed *not to fast*:

14.1 Jesus said to them: “If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits.”

14.2 And whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.

14.3 *For*, what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which issues from your mouth will pollute you.

I think the later Syrian *Book of Steps* sheds light on this distinction in fasting:

“Why do we [the Perfect] *not fast* twice a week as it is written for the Upright? The Perfect fast everyday. *Why do we not pray* three times a day -- as well as in the morning and in the evening -- as it is written for the Upright? The Perfect praise [God] the whole day. *Why do we not keep the Law of God and do alms, nor do we pray with them*, as it is written for the Upright? While, on the hand, the Perfect perform the rites all their days and pray unceasingly before our Lord. But when Sunday comes, in order that we do not learn about righteousness, sin directs us to say, ‘Our business has suffered loss.’ When the time for prayer comes, in order that we do not worship our Creator, we say that ‘our profits have perished.’ Those who wish to be raised up from the world and perfected, why do they not perform for themselves the rites of weeks, fast and pray, learn the truth and be humbled, and after a while they will perform the rites of the months, and then of the seasons, and then of the years until they are strengthened and are raised up completely from the earth and live in heaven? There they will pray and serve before our Lord, and not below on earth.” (Memra 7, 79)

For the ‘Perfect’ of the *Book of Steps* they do not fast, pray, or give alms as the ‘Upright’ do, because they “pray unceasingly before our Lord.” I assume that the early Thomas community practiced their ‘fasting’ in a similar manner: not that they didn’t fast, but that they were in a relative posture or condition of permanent fasting and prayer before God, which made the momentary practices distinguished as prayer and fasting appear pointless. A brief summary of the possible practices of the Thomas group reflected in their Gospel can be listed as follows:

- 1) A commitment to do away with gender distinctions as a way of recovering the first image of God that was *both male and female*.
- 2) A commitment to chastity and/or virginity.
- 3) A commitment to not eat meat.
- 4) An effort to 'overcome' the fleshly garment donned after the 'fall' through the denial of the body.

When one compares the above list to the characterization of early Syrian Christianity at the end of chapter one, one can see a number of parallels:

- 1) Life in the material condition is problematic and needs to be overcome.
- 2) One must avoid carnal behavior by avoiding meat and wine.
- 3) One should embrace celibacy or remain a virgin for life.
- 4) One must become a solitary one.
- 5) One must join the divine Bridegroom in the Bridal Chamber.
- 6) One must overcome fate.
- 7) The Kingdom is in the Beginning in Genesis 1; one must return there.

Thus, it seems to me, that the praxis of the Thomas community discussed above was intended to recreate the condition of the first creation in Genesis 1 and that the later Syrian characteristics are part of this project to recreate the experience of the initial image of God.

The Perfect, The Qeïama, Thomas, and Eden

The later texts in the Thomas trajectory support this characterization of the community behind the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. The *Book of Thomas* represents a detailed commentary of the praxis of the Thomas community responsible for the major

redaction *Gospel of Thomas* from a later period.⁶⁴⁹ The *Book of Thomas*, like the *Gospel of Thomas*, is yet another edition of the elaborative process inaugurated in the *Thomas* tradition. As in the later *Book of Steps* the *Book of Thomas* addresses itself to the 'Perfect':

Watch and pray that you not come to be in the flesh, but rather that you come forth from the bondage of the bitterness of this life. And as you pray, you will find rest, for you have left behind the suffering and the disgrace. For when you come forth from the sufferings and passions of the body, you will receive rest from the good one, and you will reign with the king, you joined with him and he with you, from now on, for ever and ever, Amen.

The Book of Thomas The Contender *Writing To the Perfect*
Remember me also, my brethren, in your prayers:
Peace to the saints and those who are spiritual.

One wonders, however, who the 'Perfect' are being distinguished from. In the *Book of Steps* we learn that there was eventually a distinction made between two groups: the Upright (*kēnē*) and the Perfect (*gmīrē*). This distinction was also made between the *benai qeiamā*,⁶⁵⁰ the 'sons of the covenant,' in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*⁶⁵¹ and the broader Christian community. This also occurs in St. Ephrem's *Hymns on Virginity*,⁶⁵² and the Messalian controversy (which will be discussed below). Within the earliest forms of Syrian Christianity it seems that there was

⁶⁴⁹ See the comparisons and discussion in chapter three.

⁶⁵⁰ See Maude, M., "Who Were the *Bnai Qyâmā*?" *Journal of Theological Studies* OS 36 [141] (1935), 13-21; Griffith, S. H. 1993. "Monks", "Singles", and the "Sons of the Covenant": Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology, in: *EYLOGHMA: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft*, S. J. E. Carr, S. Parenti, A.-A. Thiermeyer and E. Velkovska, eds.). *Studia Anselmiana* 110, *Analecta Liturgica* 17. Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 141-160; Nedungatt, G. 1973. The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church. *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39: 191-215, 419-444; Shirinian, M. E. 2001-2002. Reflections on the "Sons and Daughters of the Covenant" in Armenian Sources. *Revue des études arméniennes* 28: 261-285; Vööbus, A. 1961. Vööbus, A., "The Institution of the *Benai Qeiamā* and *Benat Qeiamā* in the Ancient Syrian Church," *Church History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1961), 19-27; Murray, R., "The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syrian Church," *New Testament Studies* 21: (1974-1975), 59-80; Vööbus, A., *Celibacy: A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church*, Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile 1 (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951).

⁶⁵¹ Gwynn, J., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 13. P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds., (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890.)

⁶⁵² McVey, K.E., trans., *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), see especially, "The Hymns of Virginity and on the Symbols of the Lord."

always a 'church' within the 'Church,' an elite group of ascetical heroes that renounced the world and lived *together* as *solitary ones*: the *ihūdāyā* (the 'alone ones'). This makes sense, given the fact that the *qeiāmā*, the *ihūdāyā*, the 'prayers' (referred to as the Messalians), and the 'Perfect,' were all required to renounce sexual contact; for, if each of these groups could not reproduce, one can assume that the Syrian Christian experiment would disappear in but a few generations. Perhaps the experimental praxis of the early Judas Thomas group became too intense for the wider emerging Christian community in Syria. It is also possible that this separation between the 'Perfect' and the broader community (as reflected in the *Book of Thomas*, the *Book of Steps*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and Aphrahat⁶⁵³) was established from the very beginning of the Thomas and Syrian Christian movement. Whatever the case, by the time of the *Book of Thomas* the condition of the 'Perfect,' who were presumably related to the community responsible for the major redaction,⁶⁵⁴ diminished. The 'Perfect' in the *Book of Thomas* are clearly in a defensive posture, as is indicated by the substantial number of woes pronounced against their persecutors. In the *Book of Steps* we find a full distinction between the 'Perfect' and the 'Upright,' and most of the text reads almost as an apology for the way of life practiced by the Perfect.⁶⁵⁵ R. Kitchen and M. Parmentier describe this rhetorical posture:

The author seems to be confronting a conservative or fundamentalist faction in the *Liber Graduum* community whose moral rigidity caused it to see issues in black and white. Conflict also arose when some families did not respond well to their children accepting the covenant of Uprightness or Perfection. The author

⁶⁵³ See Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, *Memra* 6 "On Monks."

⁶⁵⁴ This is evinced by the substantial parallels between the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Thomas*. See chapter four.

⁶⁵⁵ "While the overall purpose of the *Liber Graduum* is to elaborate a picture of the spiritual life, the thread running through it is the description of the two principal groups of Christians -- the Upright (*kēnē*) and the Perfect (*gmīrē*) -- their duties and pilgrimage toward heaven and salvation, as well as their relationship with one another and the wider Church." (Kitchen, R.A. and M.F.G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Introduction, xxxviii)

observes that 'the world condemns Christianity,' for parents found their children to be distressingly stubborn and disrespectful. The author admits that some young, immature Christians are arrogant about their faith and they should be humble and accept their family's criticism as long as they can.⁶⁵⁶

According to the *Book of Steps*, "The Upright inherit this side of the city of the Perfect; but the Perfect live with our Lord in *Eden* and in the heavenly Jerusalem because they have become similar to him."⁶⁵⁷ I cannot help but see a connection between the 'Perfect' who are 'spiritual' in the *Book of Thomas* and the 'Perfect' in the *Book of Steps* who, like the Thomas group, live as if in Eden.

In the *Book of Steps*, "The boundary line between Uprightness and Perfection is the renunciation of the world and the requisite celibacy. Incompleteness, not error, limits the spiritual advance of the Upright, yet they are still promised a real reward..."⁶⁵⁸ The Perfect, likewise, in the *Book of Thomas* condemn sexual relations and renounce all love of the world:

10. Then the savior continued and said, "O unsearchable love of the light! O bitterness of the fire that blazes in the bodies of men and in their marrow, kindling in them night and day, and burning the limbs of men and making their minds become drunk and their souls become deranged [...] them within males and females [...] night and moving them, [...] secretly and visibly. For the males move [...] upon the females and the females upon the males. Therefore it is said, 'Everyone who seeks the truth from true wisdom will make himself wings so as to fly, fleeing the lust that scorches the spirits of men.' And he will make himself wings to flee every visible spirit."

The Perfect of the *Book of Thomas* and the *Book of Steps* have much in common with the praxis proposed by the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. The Perfect in each of these cases 1) avoid meat, 2) renounce all wealth, usury, and business, 3) embrace celibacy as a requirement,

⁶⁵⁶ Kitchen, R.A. and M.F.G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps*, Introduction, liii.

⁶⁵⁷ Memra 14, 136.

⁶⁵⁸ Kitchen, R.A. and M.F.G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps*, Introduction, xlii.

and 4) strive to become 'spiritual ones' by overcoming the body through asceticism. A few examples from the *Book of Steps* are listed below:

"The perfect do not take wives, nor do they work on the land, nor acquire possessions, nor have a place to lay their heads on earth like their teacher."

"The Upright neither plunder nor cheat nor take advantage [of others], nor seek what is not their own; but the Perfect neither possess nor build nor plant, and they do not inherit the land nor work for food and clothing, but live like a pauper in grace... [T]he Perfect rise above every inheritance of the visible earth..." (Memra 14, 135).

"The Upright exact what is their from wherever they lend or buy without usury or contracts; but the Perfect do not borrow or possess more than meager food and humble clothing." (Memra 14, 136).

"Give me now your full attention, O one who wishes *to become a solitary* and is anxious to travel quickly to the city of our Lord Jesus. I will show you how you may go directly to the city of our king, if you have the strength to journey as I will show you. Because the steps are difficult to climb, I will guide you [how] to climb." (Memra 19, 183, Emphasis mine).

In both the *Book of Steps* and the *Book of Thomas* the initiates are referred to as children and are exhorted to progress toward Perfection:

4. Now Thomas answered and said to the savior, "Tell us about these things that you say are not visible, but are hidden from us."

5. The savior said, "All bodies [...] the beasts are begotten [...] it is evident like [...] this, too, those that are above [...] things that are visible, but they are visible in their own root, and it is their fruit that nourishes them. But these visible bodies survive by devouring creatures similar to them with the result that the bodies change. Now that which changes will decay and perish, and has no hope of life from then on, since that body is bestial. So just as the body of the beasts perishes, so also will these formations perish. Do they not derive from intercourse like that of the beasts? If it, too, derives from intercourse, how will it beget anything different from beasts? *So, therefore, you are babes until you become perfect.*"⁶⁵⁹ (*Book of Thomas*)

"When you see from now on a child who is not concerned about how to dress and feed himself, say, 'This is my [way of life].' When you see him not desiring a wife and capable of crying at any time, say, 'These are mine, I will become without desire and

⁶⁵⁹ J. Turner's translation. Emphasis mine.

cry at any time.' When you find him neither judging nor perceiving [anyone as] evil people and adulterers say, "These are min.'" (*Book of Steps*, Memra 16, 164).

As was already demonstrated in chapter three, the *Book of Steps*, like the major redaction, identifies the Kingdom of God with the Garden of Eden reclaimed. Take, for example, memra 20, 215:

"[A] person, possessing that living soul that belonged to Adam while he had not yet sinned, and in the fulfillment of this step, will enter Eden, the house of his salvation. While this sinful thought and its fruits [still] exist in him, which you see as he struggles to uproot and kill, he has departed from the paradise of the Kingdom; but when that sin and its fruits is completely evil and hateful cease to have an effect on him, he will enter the bridal chamber of the Kingdom."

Here we have two important major redactional themes: life in Eden and the bridal chamber. The struggle described within the human soul also recalls the Pseudo-Macarian spiritual tradition of the heart and the polemical description of the 'Messalians' as those who believe in a coexistence of evil and good within the heart of the believer. According to Pseudo-Macarius: "From the time that Adam transgressed the command, the serpent entered and became master of the house, and became like a second soul with the real soul."⁶⁶⁰ As the spiritual initiate progresses, the battle for the heart between the good and evil forces erupts: "There are some persons in whom grace is operative and working peace. Within, however, evil is also present hiddenly, and the two ways of existing, namely, according to the principles of light and darkness, vie for dominance within the same heart."⁶⁶¹ At the end of the battle, which for both the 'Messalians' and Pseudo-Macarius can and should occur within the present life, a state of passionless existence (i.e. *apatheia*) overcomes the heart and divinizes the entire human person. The heart has become, for Macarius, what Eden was for the major redaction, the

⁶⁶⁰ Pseudo-Macarius, *Homilies*, 15.35.

⁶⁶¹ Pseudo-Macarius, *Homilies*, 17.4.

Gospel of Philip, and St. Ephrem: the 'bridal chamber.' It is within this bridal chamber of the heart that the Spirit of God as bridegroom commingles with the human soul as the bride.⁶⁶²

The 'Messalians' were a group of ascetics that arose in prominence in the later fourth century in Edessa and the Osrohene. The term Messalians derives from the Syriac '*mešallein*' (εὐχῆται), meaning 'the praying ones.' This group was primarily characterized by 1) their commitment to constant prayer, 2) a belief that 'Perfection,' *apatheia* was attainable in the present life, 3) the belief that the Trinity could be accessed through the physical senses, and 4) the belief that both good and evil inhabited the Christian initiate's heart.⁶⁶³ According to C. Stewart's invaluable study on the Messalian controversy, the movement can be divided into three phases:

First, there is the emergence into public view of groups labelled as 'Messalian,' described in sources datable to the 370s... During the initial period these 'Messalians' were active in Mesopotamia, perhaps particularly in Osrohene. Second, there are condemnations of Messalian ideas and leaders by local councils c. 380-390. The trial of a Messalian leader at Antioch is the major event noted in the sources, but there is also clear evidence of the spread of people and ideas described as Messalian to Armenia and Pamphylia. Third, in the 420s and 430s there is the most intense period of anti-Messalian activity, directed by Asian bishops and ratified at the highest levels of ecclesiastical authority.⁶⁶⁴

The 'highest levels of ecclesiastical authority' referred to here is, of course, the Council of Ephesus in 431. During this council a text excerpted from Pseudo-Macarius' writings, referred to as the '*Ascetikon*,'⁶⁶⁵ which parallels a number of the beliefs attributed to the

⁶⁶² Cf. Stewart, C., *Working the Earth of the Heart*, chapters 1-3; Vööbus, A., *On the historical importance of the legacy of Pseudo-Macarius : new observations about its Syriac provenance* (Stockholm : ETSE, 1972).

⁶⁶³ Cf. Plested, M., *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford Theological Monographs, 2004); Stewart, C., '*Working the Earth of the Heart*': *The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991); Vööbus, A., *Les Messaliens et les Réformes de Barçama de Nisibe dans l'église perse* (Pinneberg : Baltic University, 1947).

⁶⁶⁴ Stewart, C., *Working the Earth of the Heart*, 12.

⁶⁶⁵ Stewart, C., *Working the Earth of the Heart*, 13.

Messalians was condemned. From Theodoret's *Historia Ecclesiastica*⁶⁶⁶ we learn of the following polemical characterizations of the Messalians:

- 1) They believed that "Zealous prayer alone drives out the indwelling demon."
- 2) "that each person who is born from the first parent draws with him, just like his nature, so also servitude to the demons."
- 3) "that no benefit follows from holy baptism for those who are worthy."
- 4) that by "freeing the body from the movement of the passions and completely releasing the soul from the inclination towards worse things, so that the body no longer has need of constraint by fasting nor restraint by teaching, and proceeds [as if] well trained" perfection could be attained.
- 5) That the Perfect "are called 'Possessed ones,' receiving divine energy of some demon and taking this to be the coming of the Holy Spirit. Those who are fully taken into the complete sickness shun manual labour as if it were vice."

From Timothy of Constantinople's *De iis qui ad ecclesiam ab haereticis accedunt* we learn further "that after what is called *apatheia* [is attained] by them, the soul feels such communion occur to it with the heavenly Bridegroom as a women feels in being with a man."⁶⁶⁷ I cannot help but recognize a parallel with the *Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of Philip* traditions in regard to the

⁶⁶⁶ The following quotes are from Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.11 (ed. Patmentier, 229-231), cited in the Appendix of Stewart, C., *Working the Earth of the Heart*.

⁶⁶⁷ Cited in the Appendix of Stewart, C., *Working the Earth of the Heart*.

call to embrace the bridegroom as a spiritual bride.⁶⁶⁸ After reviewing the anti-Messalian characterizations and listings of the 'Messalian' beliefs, C. Stewart concludes that:

Much of this terminology occurs in more than one [heresiological] list. Even in quick review these words make an impression: they are unusual and vivid, and the echoes between lists reinforce the impression. Evil is depicted as adhering to human nature in ways characterized as indwelling, compounding or blending, coexisting, communing, being rooted so deeply that it must be cut out. One must pray for the coming of divine help which is described as visitation, participation, communion, παρουσία, blending. The expulsion of evil and the coming of the divine is something to be *felt*. The result is ἀπάθεια, perfection, the experience of divine help in αἴσθησις, πληροφορία, ἐνέργεια, ὑπόστασις. Those who claim these experiences are dubbed 'the spiritual ones,' 'the possessed ones,' the 'perfect ones.'⁶⁶⁹

Like the core group of the *Book of Thomas* and the *Book of Steps*, the Messalians are also referred as the 'Perfect ones,' the τέλειοι.⁶⁷⁰ Whatever the merits of the characterizations of the Messalians are, there seems to be a continued theme running throughout the early Syrian Christian community: a tension between the ascetical core of the church and the broader lay community.

This is also reflected in the *benai* and *benat qeiama*. A. Vööbus, in reference to Rabbula of Edessa, describes this Syrian group as follows:

⁶⁶⁸ E.g., *Thomas* 75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaries are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber."

Philip 97. No one can know when the husband and the wife have intercourse with one another, except the two of them. Indeed, marriage in the world is a mystery for those who have taken a wife. If there is a hidden quality to the marriage of defilement, how much more is the undefiled marriage a true mystery! It is not fleshly, but pure. It belongs not to desire, but to the will. It belongs not to the darkness or the night, but to the day and the light. If a marriage is open to the public, it has become prostitution, and the bride plays the harlot not only when she is impregnated by another man, but even if she slips out of her bedroom and is seen. Let her show herself only to her father and her mother, and to the friend of the bridegroom and the sons of the bridegroom. These are permitted to enter every day into the bridal chamber. But let the others yearn just to listen to her voice and to enjoy her ointment, and let them feed from the crumbs that fall from the table, like the dogs. Bridegrooms and brides belong to the bridal chamber. No one shall be able to see the bridegroom with the bride unless he become such a one.

⁶⁶⁹ Stewart, C., *Working the Earth of the Heart*, 67-68.

⁶⁷⁰ Stewart, C., *Working the Earth of the Heart*, 67-75.

First of all, the members of the *qeïama* were forbidden to live with the seculars, family members excepted. Otherwise, the way was left open for several alternates. The members of the *qeïama* could live with their families. Another rule [from Rabbula of Edessa] asserts of the priests, "if possible, they shall dwell with one another and the same also with regard to the *benai qeïama*." The wording indicates that the smaller number by far of the *benai qeïama* lived in specially designed dwellings. Further we are told more about the location of their dwelling places. A ruling in connection with the priests says that they must live in the church, the deacons, too, and "if possible, also the *benai qeïama*." Another canon, in fact, presupposes such a situation and regulates this life so that the *benai qeïama* are not permitted to place food into the apse, eat in the church, keep anything profane there, and ascend the raised floor of the altar. With regard to the *benat qeïana*, greater stress is placed upon communal life. In Rabbula's rules it is commanded that, if possible, they should live together... The *benai qeïama* and *benat qeïama* took the vow of virginity and became the "brides of Christ." All the measures of Rabbula manifest vigilance in protecting this virtue. It was forbidden for the *beniai qeïama* to live with women, and for the *benat qeïanm* to live with men. Also other rigid disciplinary measures were designed to protect the ideal of virginity.⁶⁷¹

This institutionalized shift in the 'ascetic core' of the Syrian Church by Bishop Rabbula in the early fifth century marks the domestication of the intense ascetic ethos expressed in the *Book of Thomas* and the *Book of Steps*. In the former two texts we find the Perfect ones in charge of the broader Syrian church -- they dictate the steps from the Upright person to Perfection/*apatheia* and designate the work that the Upright laity must do (e.g. feed the poor and the widows). In Rabbula's rules, however, it is the church hierarchy (though still ascetic) that dictates the conditions to the perfect. In Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* the members of the *qeïama* (of which he is included⁶⁷²) are exhorted to virginity and renounce wealth:

Therefore read in this whatever I have written unto you, you and the brethren [the *qeïama*, the 'Perfect'], the monks that love virginity. And be on your guard against scorers. For whosoever scorers and mocks his brother, the word that is

⁶⁷¹ Vööbus, A., "The Institution of the Benai Qeïama and Benat Qeïama in the Ancient Syrian Church," *Church History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1961), 19-27; 20-21.

⁶⁷² Cf. Lehto, A., *Divine Law, Asceticism, and Gender in Aphrahat's Demonstrations, with a Complete Annotated Translation of the Text and Comprehensive Syriac Glossary* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Toronto, 2003), 3-10.

written in the Gospel fitly applies to him; namely, when our Lord wished to take account with the avaricious and with the Pharisees. For it is written:— Because they loved money, they mocked Him. So also now those that do not agree with these things mock in the same way. Read then and learn. Be zealous for reading and for doing. And let the Law of God be your meditation at every time. And when you have read this epistle, on your life (I adjure you), my beloved, arise and pray, and remember my sinfulness in your prayer.⁶⁷³

The *Book of Thomas*, the *Book of Steps*, and Aphrahat indicate a communal aspect to the ‘solitary life’ of the Perfect ones. Consider *Book of Thomas*:

15. Thomas answered and said, "It is beneficial for us, lord, to rest among our own?"

16. The savior said, "Yes, it is useful. And it is good for you, since things visible among men will dissolve - for the vessel of their flesh will dissolve, and when it is brought to naught it will come to be among visible things, among things that are seen.

Both textual traditions parallel the *qeïama* in renouncing intercourse and embracing Adam’s Edenic existence, consider, for example, *Book of Steps* Memra 15, 144:

“Therefore, keep the commandments today as [God] has spoken to you and come to that Perfection that Adam had wasted. When you have come to that thing from which Adam fell, see, it has removed the lust from you. When you became celibate without lust you will see that these members are for urinating and not for intercourse. Because when you become a celibate, lust will never ascend again upon your heart, and you will no longer desire intercourse just as a dead person whose soul is removed does not desire it.”

Likewise in Memra 13, 131 “If he [the initiate] desires to become Perfect, he [must] empty himself, become celibate and abandon everything and become attached to our Lord in heaven and become dead from the use of the world.”

In the *Book of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, and the *Book of Steps* there appears to be a continued elaboration of the themes introduced in the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Each of the communities behind these texts maintain a commitment to

⁶⁷³ Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, 6.20. J.Gwynn’s translation.

celibacy, an avoidance of meat, a renunciation of wealth, usury, and business, a commitment to asceticism, and a desire to reclaim the first image of God created in Genesis 1. The initial 'playful' elaborative tendencies in the major redaction are increasingly expanded upon and offered more precision in the subsequent texts. Yet, I can't help but see in the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* a participation in this distinctively Syrian form of Christianity. Accordingly, then, the similarities between the 'Perfect,' the *Qeïama*, the 'Messalians,' and the major redaction group can be listed as follows:

- 1) They are each a group separated from both society and the broader Christian Church
- 2) They all reject sexual intercourse and embrace celibacy
- 3) They constitute a group of 'solitaries' living (and praying) together
- 4) They avoid meat
- 5) They all practice forms of asceticism
- 6) They all desire to become 'Perfect' as Adam once was in Genesis 1 and in Eden

According to A. Vööbus these ascetical heroes were not an emergent phenomenon, but a group that represented the very ethos of the beginning of Syrian Christianity. He traces the origins of this 'earliest' community, like G. Quispel, to a Palestinian Jewish-Christianity distantly related to a Jewish ascetical community (probably associated with the Qumran community⁶⁷⁴):

The Syriac term *qeïama*, "covenant," with its derivations *benai qeïama*, "the sons of the covenant," and *benat qeïama*, "the daughters of the covenant," not only marks the idiosyncrasy of primitive Syrian Christianity but it also mirrors a development which parallels the whole process of transformation in ancient Syrian Christianity. Originally the term *qeïama* designated the whole church comprised of ascetically oriented Christians. Standing face to face with this singular concept of church and the peculiar profile of primitive Syrian

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Vööbus, A., *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, chapter one.

Christianity⁶⁷⁵, we must be reminded that the first Christian impulses in the lands of the Euphrates and Tigris did not come from Hellenistic Christianity via Antioch but from Palestinian Jewish Christianity [contra the Bishop Palut tradition]. Therefore the earliest traditions implanted here reveal the Palestinian Aramaean influence not only in the contacts which these Christian Jews had with the Palestinian Jewish Christians but also in the use of the ancient Palestinian Targum as the first biblical texts translated into Syriac⁶⁷⁶ and in the fundamentally ascetic orientation of the Christian Kerygma which echoes the Palestinian ascetic trends. These archaic conditions, which understood the *qeïama* as the whole congregation of celibates who alone were admitted to baptism and sacramental life, were tenacious and were able to last for generations...

However, a vital force always finds ways to continue its existence. It was no different for the dynamic part of the most ancient Syrian Christianity which could never agree to equate itself with the new form and abandon convictions for which it was willing to sacrifice its life. Now the term *qeïama* was inherited by those Christians who had the task of carrying on the archaic traditions in the changed situation. Under these circumstances the ties with the past could be kept only in a concealed manner in a sort of theological sublimation.

I believe this dissertation's work recovering the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Genesis 1-3 oriented community behind it can contribute much to Vööbus' picture above. Our earliest record of an association of 'Perfect ones' comes from the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Thomas*. The continuity of this group expressed in the trajectory from the *Gospel of Thomas* to the *Book of Thomas*, and, finally, to the *Acts of Thomas*, presents the *Gospel of Thomas*, and more specifically the major redaction of *Thomas*, as the earliest form of this phenomenon of a community of Syrian ascetics joined together in their pursuit of the initial creation in Genesis 1. In this sense, the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* represents the first distinctively Syrian Christian group. My reasons for this proposal are as follows:

⁶⁷⁵ See the characterization at the end of chapter one.

⁶⁷⁶ See these works by A. Vööbus: *Investigations into the text of the New Testament used by Rabbula of Edessa* (Pinneberg : Baltic University, 1947); *Early versions of the New Testament; manuscript studies* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1954); *Peschitta und Targumim des Pentateuchs : neues Licht zur Frage der Herkunft der Peschitta aus dem altpalästinischen Targum : Handschriftenstudien* (Stockholm : Etse, 1958).

- 1) According to the dating proposals of S. Patterson and H. Koester listed above, the initial pieces of the *Gospel of Thomas* should be located in the mid-first century C.E. This would present *Thomas* as earlier than any other extant Syrian text. This is further bolstered by Patterson's demonstration that *Thomas* represents a tradition *independent* of the canonical Synoptic Gospel tradition.
- 2) The figure Judas Thomas is associated with Syria alone, which strongly suggests that *Thomas* is to be connected with Syria.⁶⁷⁷
- 3) The *Gospel of Thomas* is commented upon by the second century Syrian *Book of Thomas*.⁶⁷⁸ This suggests that the *Gospel of Thomas* had been used for a period of time by the community before the commentary was offered. In my opinion, this permits us to push the major redaction back to at least the early second century, and perhaps the late first century.
- 4) Because the textual tradition of the *Gospel of Thomas* is paralleled in a number of distinctively Syrian traditions such as Pseudo-Macarius,⁶⁷⁹ the Diatesseron,⁶⁸⁰ the *Gospel of Philip*, and the *Acts of Thomas*,⁶⁸¹ it is right to assume that the *Gospel of Thomas* preceded each of these traditions.

⁶⁷⁷ Compare the traditions recorded in the *Doctrine of Addai* and the *Acts of Thomas*. See also the discussion in the opening section of this chapter.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. Turner, J., *The Book of Thomas the Contender*, chapter two.

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. Baker, A., Pseudo-Macarius and the Gospel of Thomas, *Vigiliae Christianae* 18, 1964, 215-225; Quispel, G., The Syrian Thomas and the Syrian Macarius, *Vigiliae Christianae* 18, 1964, 226-235.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. Baarda, T., "Thomas and Tatian" in: T. Baarda, ed., *Early transmission of words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the text of the New Testament*, (VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 1983), 37-49; Schippers, R., "Het Evangelie van Thomas een onafhankelijke traditie? Antwoord aan professor Quispel," *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 61, 1961, 46-54; Perrin, N., *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (SBLAB 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); Baker, A., Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron, *Journal of Theological Studies* 16, 1965, 449-454.

⁶⁸¹ See chapter 3.

5) Because the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* reflects nearly all of the shared characteristics⁶⁸² of the earliest Christian groups in the Syrian Orient.

Was the 'Thomas' group behind the major redaction directly connected to the *qeïama* or the 'Perfect' of the *Book of Steps*? This, unfortunately, we cannot know for certain. However, it is clear that the group behind the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Thomas* represent a much better alternative to the Qumran community/Jewish ascetic proposal for the emergence of the *qeïama*, the 'Perfect,' and the *ihîdāyâ*; the major redaction has all of the elements of Syrian asceticism and develops a tradition that reaches back into the first century (see the proposed earlier strata in the Appendix). At this stage all that we can assert is that the community behind the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* represents our earliest extant instance of this particularly Syrian ascetical phenomenon. Was there a causal relationship between these different ascetical groups (i.e., the *qeïama*, the 'Perfect,' and the *ihîdāyâ*)? Again, we cannot be sure, but it seems likely to me that the group behind the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas* inaugurated this tradition of an association of ascetic heroes in pursuit of the recovery of the first creation in Genesis 1. They offered a path back to the first beginning -- but this path, it seems, was not for everyone, only the 'Perfect.' And it was these 'Perfect ones,' these members of the *qeïama* that dominated the spiritual landscape of Syria for many centuries. Though I would not doubt that there may have been other forms of Christianity in this earliest of periods (ca. 90-130 C.E.), for now I am only sure of *Thomas'* early Syrian provenance. I believe it is safe to assert that the *Gospel of Thomas* is currently our earliest Syrian Christian text. Finally, I believe the veil shrouding Syrian Christian

⁶⁸² See the end of chapter one and chapter three.

beginnings, as A. Vööbus so eloquently put it,⁶⁸³ is finally being lifted. What we see is a story quite different from the master narrative put forward in the later *Doctrine of Addai*. This earlier form of indigenous Syrian Christianity was at its heart elaborative, ascetical, and Genesis-1-bound -- and it is in *Thomas* that we find its first record. The *Thomas* tradition began as a chreia collection (as demonstrated in the Appendix) that was used in performance and perhaps educational contexts, but it became much more than a chreia collection as the tradition moved into Syria. There it became the pathway that leads back to the beginning in Genesis 1. Meaning-making and elaboration is the beginning of the Gospel of Thomas tradition, but the end is back in the Beginning.

⁶⁸³ Vööbus, A., *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, 3.

Appendix

Recovering the Major Redaction

It is the repetitive “Jesus said” formula that provides the *Gospel of Thomas* with its hum and rhythm. Yet, this structural beat, which invites order for the reader, is interrupted by both the thematic shifts between the sayings and formal discontinuities. Underneath this semblance of order provided by the “Jesus said” formula there lurks apparent disorder. Prior to the work of A. Callahan⁶⁸⁴ this ‘randomness’ ruled the scholarly approach to the *Gospel of Thomas* (perhaps out of frustration). The *Thomas* tradition was either entirely random or merely connected by trivial word associations. There is, however, a ‘rhyme and reason’⁶⁸⁵ to the flow of the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the structural repetition of the “Jesus said” formula is key to understanding this. This formula is what invites the oscillation between experimental meaning-making exercises and the interest in preserving a record of Jesus’ sayings. There is a certain freedom in the *Gospel of Thomas*, which is evinced in the novel and unexpected interpretive moves and additions. It is this fluency between creative expansion from a given

⁶⁸⁴ Callahan, A., “No Rhyme or Reason”: The Hidden Logia of the Gospel of Thomas,” *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4, Jesus’ Sayings in the Life of the Early Church: Papers Presented in Honor of Helmut Koester’s Seventieth Birthday (1997), 411-426. According Callahan:

In *Thomas*, a medley of forms surpasses genre. The organizing principle of the sapiential sayings collection ostensibly has little rhyme or reason; but on closer inspection, it proves to have, if not rhyme, at least alliteration and assonance. Its reason, the *logos* of these *logo sophon*, as James Robinson has taught us to call them, is the metalogical mesh of lexical links and matching motifs of this “odd sequence” that constitutes the sayings of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

(*Ibid.*, 426.)

⁶⁸⁵ A term use in tribute to A. Callahan’s work in his article, “No Rhyme or Reason”: The Hidden Logia of the Gospel of Thomas.”

set of Jesus sayings that grants *Thomas* its lasting legacy. Within the structural apparatus provided by the “Jesus said” formula of the *Gospel of Thomas* exists some very novel additions and elaborations. While this dissertation does not permit an extended investigation of the various strata operating in the text, I will, in this Appendix, demonstrate how the remaining literary components of the *Thomas* tradition retain both a coherent literary structure and thematic continuity when, what I term, ‘the major redaction’ of the *Gospel of Thomas* is removed. This chapter represents the first prong in a three-pronged methodology. The three principles of my methodology can be outlined as follows:

- 1) A *literary* analysis designed to detect literary fissures and fractures operating within the text which are taken to be evidence of literary, rhetorical, and therefore stratigraphic indicators. This methodology is based on the chreia elaborative schemes from the *progymnasmata* which will be introduced and detailed below.
- 2) A *thematic* analysis designed to demonstrate that the material categorized as ‘major redactional’ in this chapter form a coherent thematic narrative. In chapter four this thematic frame will be identified as the creation and Garden of Eden stories in Genesis 1-3.
- 3) A *historical* analysis designed to show that the later texts in Syria and within the Thomasine trajectory specifically (i.e. *The Book of Thomas* and the *Acts of Thomas*) exhibit the interests of the ‘major redaction’ recovered in this chapter and detailed in chapter four, rather than the earlier strata briefly outlined in this chapter. This final piece of my methodology will be demonstrated in chapter four.

The present Appendix works ‘backwards’ as it were. Rather than beginning with a particular thematic meta-narrative and searching throughout the text for sayings that fit this narrative and then organizing them under the rubric of certain strata, I have decided, as a manner of

control over what can become arbitrary scholarly decision, to begin with the literary *structure* of the text.

Though I present this literary analysis first, I must admit that I did not begin my own investigation of the strata operating in the *Gospel of Thomas* in like manner. Rather, I began my own preparatory research with the thematic coherence⁶⁸⁶ of what appeared to me as rather 'exotic' material in comparison with the broader and more familiar canonical Jesus tradition. Yet, I did not want to proceed in this dissertation as I had in my own preparatory research. My reasoning behind this move lies with a desire to ensure that I had not just created a particular meta-narrative which I could then use to make the text say what I wanted or expected it to say. While I remain convinced that the Eden story serves as the best thematic context for understanding and identifying the major redaction, I believe I need to demonstrate that the sayings material 'underneath' the redactional material retains a coherent narrative and/or rhetorical apparatus. If I cannot show that the underlying strata could exist coherently *without* the major redaction, then there would be a strong chance that the 'redaction' part of the 'major redaction' is not so redactional after all. Redaction requires, by definition, *preexisting* material with which a redactor can operate. Moreover, if I cannot show that the underlying material coheres thematically and/or rhetorically, then it could be claimed by others that *Thomas* was formed all at once, by one hand -- and hence *Thomas* would not be a stratified document, but a one-layer collection of disparate sayings. This is why this chapter's methodology moves in the opposite direction. Rather than beginning with what I identify as

⁶⁸⁶ By thematic coherence, I mean a set of motifs that make sense within a particular interpretive frame. One such example, in regard to the major redaction, is the Garden of Eden story. In the book of Proverbs, for example, one finds a unified interest in the theme of Wisdom. While 'thematic coherence' is a broad term, I believe it is helpful in the initial stages of stratification; for it helps us notice thematic shifts, which often suggest redaction or the construction of an argument.

the major redaction, I begin, instead, with the earlier strata. If it can be shown that the major redactional material *elaborates earlier material, then it can be shown definitively that the major redaction was indeed dependent on an earlier textual tradition.* This can only be shown, however, if the earlier strata operate coherently without the presence of the major redactional material. If this chapter is successful, a list of the major redactional sayings will be identified and listed. But we must proceed backwards.

Towards a Stratification of the Gospel of Thomas

Thomas offers the reader and the various compilers of the tradition a measure of control within the creative interpretive enterprise. This is accomplished, again, by the sequential “Jesus said” formula. The “Jesus said” formula represents the *structure* of the *Gospel of Thomas* -- it is what distributes its content. Yet, within this rubric exists much interpretive freedom. In order to understand *Thomas* I propose that it should be recognized as a chreia collection (which will be defined below), rather than as a ‘Sayings Gospel’ or ‘Speech Gospel.’ The *Gospel of Thomas* does not do for us what the canonical Gospels do. It is not a ‘Gospel’ in the traditional sense, despite its appended title. The title was inserted to give the tradition authority, not to place it within the emerging ‘Gospel’ genre (which I associate with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).⁶⁸⁷ *Thomas* is interested in expanded meaning-making -- this, it seems to me, is its overall hermeneutical interest.

The Chreia in Antiquity

Before undertaking the recovery of what I term the ‘major redaction’ (which provides us with the Syrian connections) it is important to establish the genre within which *Thomas* operates, which I propose is the ‘chreia collection’ or, perhaps better put merely as the ‘chreia

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Koester, H., *Ancient Christian Gospels* (Trinity Press, 1992), see especially chapter one.

tradition.’ What we know of the chreia derives primarily from a series of teaching manuals referred to as the *progymnasmata* (literally: ‘preparatory exercises’), which instructed students how to create arguments from the initial chreiai. The chreia was situational; it was responsive to a certain situation that had been presented. It was the occasion for the student or rhetor to respond with a certain judgment or assessment. Beyond the chreia exercises there existed a number of other literary exercises, such as: praise and blame, description, fable, thesis, and speaking in character.⁶⁸⁸

B. Mack makes three overall observations of the *progymnasmata*: first, that “the earlier chapters work with small units of popular and literary material not technically rhetorical”; second, “that the collection ranges from small literary units, through sub-units of the rhetorical speech, to exercises having to do with complete speech forms”; third, that the progress through the *progymnasmata* “allowed for the learning through memorization, imitation, and practice as an introduction to the whole system of rhetorical theory and technique.”⁶⁸⁹

Our first record of these *progymnasmata* is from Aelius Theon of Alexandria in the first (or perhaps fourth) century C.E.⁶⁹⁰ According to R.F. Hock and E.N. O’Neil, the frequent references to the Stoicism of Theon of Alexandria and his close literary relationship with Quintilian (another master of the chreia who wrote in the late first century) has suggested

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. Mack, B.L., “Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School,” in B.L. Mack and V.K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008; previously published with Polebridge Press, 1989), 31-68; 34.

⁶⁸⁹ Mack, B.L., “Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School,” 35-36.

⁶⁹⁰ Hock, R.F. and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* Vol. I., *The Progymnasmata* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 1-112.

that Theon may have been writing in the first century C.E. in Alexandria.⁶⁹¹ However, Hock and O'Neil also acknowledge that this evidence is based on distant connections and thematic associations rather than hard documentary evidence. The first papyrus fragments of the *progymnasmata* derive from the fourth century rather than the third. Yet, on the basis of Quintilian's writings, we do know that the chreia elaborative lessons were around in the first century. Hock and O'Neil also acknowledge that the parallels between Quintilian's chreia elaborative scheme and Theon's are remote and not enough to build a case for a first century date. B. Mack, on the other hand, is convinced that Theon derives from the first century, writing that the:

Progymnasmata probably began to appear in the first century B.C.E., although the earliest text extant is from Theon in the first century C.E. In addition to Theon's handbook, there are two others of importance. The first is attributed to Hermogenes (second century), a text that apparently came to be preferred in the Latin tradition of rhetoric via its translation by Priscian. The other is that of Aphthonius (fourth century) which became the standard progymnasmata in the Byzantine tradition.⁶⁹²

The earliest extant text of the *progymnasmata*, however, is not from the first century, but from the fourth (or fifth).⁶⁹³ The mere fact that there were so many writers by the name of Theon in the first and second centuries of the Common Era suggests to U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf⁶⁹⁴ that the Theon of the *progymnasmata* should not be assumed to be the Theon associated with Quintilian's Stoic philosopher.⁶⁹⁵ Beyond Wilamowitz and the caution of

⁶⁹¹ Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 63-64.

⁶⁹² Mack, B.L., "Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School," 33-34.

⁶⁹³ Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 64.

⁶⁹⁴ Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U.v. "Asianismus und Attizismus," *Hermes* 35 (1900), 1-52; 6-8.

⁶⁹⁵ Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.6.48 and 9.3.76.

Hock and O’Neil, most scholars have assumed a first century date for Theon of Alexandria.⁶⁹⁶ I favor the early date of Theon (or at least his *progymnasmata* method) because his rhetorical principles of elaboration permeate much of the Gospel literature and, as will be shown below, the *Gospel of Thomas* tradition.⁶⁹⁷ Whatever the case may be with Theon’s date, it is certain that a similar chreia elaborative method was around in the first century, and it is this method that is important for the project of this chapter.

According to Theon, “A chreia is a concise statement or action which is attributed with aptness to some specific character or to some analogous character.”⁶⁹⁸ The important point here is that the chreia is both apt and succinct while being attributed to someone. According to Theon, “every concise maxim, if it is attributed to a character, produces a chreia. And the reminiscence is an action or saying that is useful for living.”⁶⁹⁹ The precision of character attribution is what makes a saying (whether it be an aphorism, proverb, or maxim) into a chreia. Yet, there is another important criterion that Theon introduces: the chreia must be *useful for living*. Theon distinguishes the chreia from the maxim and the reminiscence in the following ways:

The maxim, however, differs from the chreia in these four ways: 1) The chreia always is attributed to a character, while the maxim never is. 2) The chreia sometimes makes a general statement, sometimes a specific one, while the maxim makes only a general one. 3) Furthermore, the chreia is witty, sometimes containing nothing useful for living, while the maxim is always concerned with matters useful in life. And 4) the chreia is an action or saying,

⁶⁹⁶ The first to argue persuasively for a mid-first century date for Theon was G. Reichel in his doctoral dissertation, *Quaestiones Progymnasmaticae* (Leipzig, 1909). L. Radermacher argued for a late first century and possibly early second century dating based on the parallels in Hermogenes, see his article, “Hermogenes,” in A. Pauly and G. Wissowa *et. al.*, *Pauly’s Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1884).

⁶⁹⁷ This is demonstrated persuasively by the collected works of B. Mack and V. Robbins on the *progymnasmata* and the chreia in: B.L. Mack and V.K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*.

⁶⁹⁸ Theon of Alexandria, “On the Chreia,” in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 83.

⁶⁹⁹ Theon of Alexandria, “On the Chreia,” in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 83.

while a maxim is only a saying. The reminiscence is distinguished from the chreia in these two ways: 1) The chreia is concise, while the reminiscence is sometimes expanded. And 2) the former is attributed to various characters, while the reminiscence is also told by itself.⁷⁰⁰

The structural “Jesus said” formula that permeates the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* may be echoing this ‘attributive principle’ of the chreia. Theon clearly stresses that attribution to a character is one of the defining features of the chreia. If we take this principle and ally it with the witty character and concise nature of many of the Jesus sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*, we can begin to see a chreia-like feature permeating much of the text. The repetitive “Jesus said” formula may have been inserted for this reason: to express Jesus’ sayings *as chreia*, rather than as general maxims or reminiscences. I cannot help but recognize the repetitive “Jesus said” formula as an intentional literary decision designed to make the text a chreia collection, rather than an ‘instruction’ or ‘wisdom’ collection.⁷⁰¹ However, I admit that this evidence alone is not enough to make the case for *Thomas*’ being a chreia collection, but more will be provided below.

According to Theon, the chreia is the very pinnacle of ancient rhetoric and literature: “It has the name ‘chreia’ because of its excellence, for more than the other exercises it is useful in many ways for life. Just as in the case of Homer, too, although there are many poets, we customarily call him alone ‘Poet’ because of his excellence.”⁷⁰² Likewise, then, it was the chreia that was the most excellent literary and rhetorical form. According to Theon, there were three main classes of chreia: 1) sayings-chreia, 2) action-chreia, and 3) and chreia that

⁷⁰⁰ Theon of Alexandria, “On the Chreia,” in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 83.

⁷⁰¹ For a brilliant analysis of these two genres see chapter seven of J.S. Kloppenborg’s *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*. See also J.M. Robinson’s groundbreaking work on the ‘wisdom of the sages’ or *logoi sophon* genre in his article “*LOGOI SOPHON*: On the Gattung of Q” in: J. M. Robinson and H. Koester, *Trajectories Through Early Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1971).

⁷⁰² Theon of Alexandria, “On the Chreia,” in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 83.

have a mix of these two, which were referred to as 'mixed-chreia.'⁷⁰³ In the *Thomas* tradition we have two of these forms, which I will illustrate with examples:

1) sayings-chreia: 92.1 Jesus said: "Seek and you will find."

2) mixed-chreia: 100.1 They showed Jesus a coin and said to him: "Caesar's people demand taxes from us." He said to them: "Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, (but) give God what is God's."

Because *Thomas* is concerned to emphasize what Jesus *said*, it should not be surprising that we do not find any action-only chreia. In order to have such, we would need a narrator -- but all we have is a 'recorder.'⁷⁰⁴

In addition to these three forms of the chreia, Theon introduces "four species of responses: 1) to a simple question, 2) to an inquiry, 3) to a question calling for an explanation, and 4) the 'responsive' species which is ambiguously designated by the name of the class."⁷⁰⁵ In *Thomas* we have evidence of three of these four, consider these examples:

1) To an inquiry: 21.1-2 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?" 21.2 He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs."

2) To a question calling for an explanation: 18.1 The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us, how will our end be?" Jesus said: "Have you discovered the beginning that you ask about the end? For, in the place where the beginning is, there the end will be."

3) Responsive chreia: 22.1 Jesus saw little children being nursed. He said to his disciples: "These little children are like those who enter the kingdom."

⁷⁰³ Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 85.

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. *Thomas* Incipit and *Thomas* 1.

⁷⁰⁵ Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 85.

The chreia, according to Theon, can be expressed in at least twelve different ways., which I will list below with examples from the *Gospel of Thomas*⁷⁰⁶:

1) In the manner of a maxim: 41. Jesus said: "Whoever has something in his hand, more will be given. And whoever has nothing, even the little that person has will be taken away from that person."

2) In the manner of an explanation: 19. Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who came into being from the beginning, before he came to be. If you become my disciples and listen to my sayings, these stones will become your servants. For there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not experience death."

3) With wit: 72. A man said to Jesus: "Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me." He said to him: "Oh sir, who has made me a divider?" He turned to his disciples and said: "I am not a divider am I?"

4) With a syllogism: 79. A woman in the crowd said to him: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you." He said to her: "Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it."

5) With an enthymeme: 104. They said to Jesus: "Come, today let us pray and fast." Jesus said: "What sin have I committed, or where have I been defeated?"

6) With an example: 21.5 *That is why I say*: "If the householder knows that a thief is coming, he will keep watch before he comes. He will not let him break into his house, his estate-kingdom, to steal his possessions."

⁷⁰⁶ These principles are listed and explained in Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 89-95

7) With a wish: 73. Jesus said: “The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord that he might send forth laborers to the harvest.”

8) In a symbolic manner: 45.2 “A good person brings forth good from his storehouse, a bad person brings forth evil from his corrupt storehouse (which is in his heart) and he speaks evil. For out of abundance (of heart) he produces evil.”

9) In a figurative manner: 48. Jesus said: “If two make peace with each other in the same house, they will say to the mountain, ‘Move away!’ and it will move.”

10) With a double entendre: 93. Jesus said: “Do not give what is holy to dogs, for they might toss them to the dung pile. Do not toss pearls to pigs, for they might [trample them].”

11) With a change of subject: 24.1 His disciples said: “Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary that we seek after it.” He said to them: “Whoever has ears to hear, hear! There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire world. If that one does not shine, there is darkness.”

12) In a combination of the forms listed mentioned above.

Theon expands these exercises by instructing students how it is also possible to elaborate the chreia themselves. Theon lists eight exercises,⁷⁰⁷ which will be listed below with examples from the *Gospel of Thomas*:

⁷⁰⁷ 1) Recitation // ἀπαγγελία

2) Inflection // κλίσις

3) Commentary // ἐπιφωνεῖν

4) Critique // ἀντιλέγειν

5) Expansion // ἐπεκτείνειν

6) Abbreviation // συστέλλειν

7) Refutation // ἀνασκευή

8) Confirmation // κατασκευή

- 1) Recitation⁷⁰⁸: 54. Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."
- 2) Inflection⁷⁰⁹: FROM --> *Thomas* 48. Jesus said: "If two make peace with each other in the same house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move away!' and it will move." TO --> *Thomas* 106. Jesus said: "When you make the two one, you will become children of (the) Man. And if you say: 'Mountain move away!' It will move."
- 3) Comment⁷¹⁰: 111 Jesus said: "The heavens and earth will be rolled up (right) before you. And the one who lives from the Living One will not see death." *Does not Jesus say: "Whoever has found oneself, the world is not worthy of that person."*
- 4) Objection⁷¹¹: 3.1-2 Jesus said: "If those who lead you proclaim to you: 'The Kingdom is in heaven,' then the birds of heaven will enter before you. If they proclaim to you: 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will enter before you. *Rather, the kingdom is within you and beyond you.*"
- 5) Expansion⁷¹²: 53. His disciples said to him: "Is circumcision beneficial or not for us?" He said to them: "If it were beneficial their father would beget them circumcised from their mother." *"Rather, true circumcision in Spirit is entirely profitable."*

⁷⁰⁸ According to Theon: "we try to the best of our ability to report the assigned chreia very clearly in the same words or in others as well." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 95). In other words, this exercise is meant to preserve, as best possible, the 'original' wording of the chreia.

⁷⁰⁹ According to Theon: "we change the characters in the chreia into the three numbers. And we do not do this unilaterally, but, for example, from singular to singular, and to dual, and to plural. And again, from dual to singular, and to dual, and to plural." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 95).

⁷¹⁰ According to Theon: "It is also possible for those who approve of what has been fittingly and concisely said in a chreia to comment that it is true or noble or advantageous or that the saying has also appealed to other men of distinction." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 99).

⁷¹¹ According to Theon: "We also object to chreia from the opposite points of view..." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 101).

⁷¹² According to Theon: "We expand the chreia whenever we enlarge upon the questions and responses in it, and upon whatever act or experience is in it." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 101).

6) Condensing⁷¹³: Compare the Greek and Coptic versions of *Thomas* 36.1

Greek: 36. Jesus said, "Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, [*about your food, about what you're going to eat, or about your clothing*] what you are going to wear."

Coptic: 36. Jesus said, "Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, what you are going to wear."

7) Refutation⁷¹⁴: 46. Jesus said: "From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women, no one is honored more than John the Baptist, (so that) his eyes need not be averted." *Yet, I have also said*: "Whoever among you becomes little will know the kingdom and will be honored more than John."

8) Confirmation⁷¹⁵: 5.1 Jesus said: "Recognize what is right in front of your face, and what is hidden will be revealed to you." *"For, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed."*

The presentation above represents only one half of the chreia elaborative tradition. The climax of the chreia elaborative tradition was the *argument*. Indeed, the greatest of all 'arts' in the Roman world was rhetoric; learning was to be esteemed, but winning was to be esteemed above all. The chreia was one of the greatest tools that the ancient rhetor could apply. Expanding and expressing a chreia was but the beginning, and could bring a student of rhetoric only so far. The *elaboration* of the chreia in an argument was, to borrow Hermogenes'

⁷¹³ According to Theon: "We condense by doing the opposite [of expansion]." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 101).

⁷¹⁴ According to Theon: "Furthermore, one must refute chreiai; for obscurity, for pleonasm, for ellipsis, for impossibility, for falsity, for unsuitability, for uselessness, for shamefulness." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 103).

⁷¹⁵ According to Theon: "It is necessary, however, to provide arguments for each part of the chreia, beginning with the first ones, using as many topics as possible. For let us not ignore the fact that it is impossible in the case of every chreia to argue from every topic." (Theon of Alexandria, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 107).

words, “the chief matter.”⁷¹⁶ The argumentative feature of the chreia elaboration was probably a development from a system related to the anonymous Latin *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which was formerly attributed to Cicero.⁷¹⁷ According to the *ad Herennium*, a complete argument was to run as follows:

- 1) *Propositio*
- 2) *Ratio*
- 3) *Confirmatio*
- 4) *Exornatio*
- 5) *Complexio*⁷¹⁸

B. Mack summarizes the development of the ‘complete argument’ of a theme or thesis in ancient Roman rhetoric as follows:

- 1) *Statement of the Theme (res)*
- 2) *Rationale*
- 3) *Restatement or Paraphrase of the theme with or without Rationale (pronuntio)*
- 4) *Statement of the Contrary (contrario)*
- 5) *Analogy (simile)*
- 6) *Example (exemplum)*
- 7) *Conclusion (conclusio)*⁷¹⁹

According to Mack, it was Hermogenes that inaugurated the argumentative features of the chreia elaboration:

The shift in emphasis that occurs with Hermogenes comes to light in the fact that there is no longer any mention of separate exercises in recitation, inflection, expansion, abbreviation, critique, or refutation. Instead Hermogenes presents a single exercise in support of the chreia as thesis in a strictly sequential order of argumentation intended to produce a full and coherent confirmation. This single exercise is called the elaboration (ἐργασία), and it manifests considerable interest in matters of style and composition.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁶ Hermogenes of Tarsus, “On the Chreia,” in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 177.

⁷¹⁷ Loeb Classical Library, Cicero: *Ad Herennium*, (London, 1954).

⁷¹⁸ *Ad Herennium*, 2.18.28.

⁷¹⁹ From Mack, B.L., “Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School,” 57.

⁷²⁰ Mack, B.L., “Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School,” 51.

Hermogenes of Tarsus elaborated the chreia as follows:

- 1) Praise
- 2) Paraphrase of the chreia (or: aphorism or saying)
- 3) Rationale
- 4) Statement from the opposite
- 5) Statement from analogy
- 6) Statement from example
- 7) Statement from authority
- 8) Exhortation⁷²¹

A cluster of sayings in *Thomas* 21 parallels this elaborative scheme:

- Question: 21.1 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?"
- Paraphrase: 21.2 He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs."
- Opposite: 21.3 When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!'
- Example: 21.5 *That is why I say*: "If the householder knows that a thief is coming, he will keep watch before he comes. He will not let him break into his house, his estate-kingdom, to steal his possessions."
- Judgment: 21.7 Gird up your loins in a great power so that the thieves do not find a way to get to you. Because the necessities which you guard, they will find <them>.
- Authority: 21.8 *Let* there be a person of understanding among you. When the grain ripened he came quickly with his sickle and reaped it.
(Note: *This is a variation on Joel 3:13: "Put the sickle in for the harvest is ready."*)
- Conclusion: 21.9 Whoever has ears, hear!

It should be noted that the above *Thomazine* variation on Hermogenes' elaborative scheme is not exact in its observance. It also should be noted that Hermogenes' elaborative scheme was the culmination of a process of development; it wasn't just formulated from a strike of pure originality. Hermogenes, like the rhetors before him, offered a variation on a developing

⁷²¹ Hermogenes of Tarsus, "On the Chreia," in: Hock, R.F. and E.N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 177.

theme: that of the chreia elaboration itself. However, the variations between the elaborative methods should not be surprising as these *progymnasmata* were classroom exercises and manuals, not strict outlines. Mack also notes that, "One would not expect to find in literary works blocks of material that followed the pattern so simply and transparently. And yet, alerted to the pattern in its form as a classroom exercise, it is possible to see it at work in an amazingly rich variety of literatures of the time."⁷²² This is certainly true in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Mack has offered the scholarly community with an immensely important chart, which permits us to visualize the differences and similarities between the various rhetorical elaborative schemes operative in the Roman world. I will reproduce a variation on this chart below:

Standard Speech form	Anaximenes' Supporting Arguments (<i>Rhet. ad Alex.</i>)	Hermogenes' Supporting Arguments	The Complete Argument (<i>Rhet. ad Her.</i>)	The Amplification of a Theme (<i>Rhet. ad Her.</i>)	Hermogenes' Elaboration
Praise					Praise
Proposition		Proposition		Proposition	Chreia/Paraphrase
			Rationale	Rationale	Rationale
Argumentatio		Confirmation		Confirmation	
		Exhortation			
	Contrary	Same/Contrary		Contrary	Contrary
	Similar	Analogy	Analogy	Analogy	Analogy
		Example	Example	Example	Example
		Lesser/Greater	Amplification		
	Judgments		Judgment		Judgment
Conclusion			Conclusion	Conclusion	Exhortation

⁷²² Mack, B.L., "Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School," 54.

It is within this general elaborative scheme that much of the *Gospel of Thomas* operates -- and I believe it is essential to recovering the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

A major difference between Hermogenes and Theon and the *Gospel of Thomas*, is that in *Thomas* each part of the elaborative process was considered or constructed to be Jesus' very word. The elaborations, in this regard, did not act as rhetorical 'speeches' by students but as Jesus' own argument. Even the statements from authority (such as Joel 3:13 above in *Thomas* 21.8) are considered Jesus' words, not the ancient authority's. This suggests to me that much of the earliest stratum within *Thomas* was less an elaboration of one particular saying and then another, but more of an overall organizing principle. The earliest stratum represents a 'storage site' for Jesus' sayings. But, this list of Jesus' sayings, however, was not just thrown together haphazardly. It was, rather, *organized* according to both theme and rhetorical intent. In other words, the initial compiler of the chreia tradition in *Thomas* did not just string sayings together but *sequenced* them so as to offer a new meaning for some of these sayings. Of course, it should be noted that the initial compiler may not have understood his or her task as one of novel interpretation, but, rather, as the recovery of the 'original' meaning.⁷²³ If I am right, the initial compiler collected a number of sayings, of which many were formerly independent, and juxtaposed them in new ways to create new meanings and interpretive frameworks. This, in my estimation, is how the entire Jesus tradition began.⁷²⁴ The mere juxtaposition of sayings

⁷²³ However, it is important to note that I am not claiming that an 'original' meaning is at all accessible or exists. I am merely suggesting that the initial compiler, like the later redactors, probably saw his or her task as one of recovery rather than experimentation.

⁷²⁴ Not that it began with *Thomas*, but that all of the sayings traditions of Jesus were *organized* according to a general rhetorical and thematic framework.

creates new meanings, or at least the potential for new meanings.⁷²⁵ As any reader of the *Gospel of Thomas* would probably recognize, that when we read *Thomas* we are inevitably drawn to question why certain sayings were juxtaposed with others.

Where *Thomas* departs from a 'typical' chreia collection is in the attribution of every saying to Jesus himself. According to Hermogenes, one would expect to find a number of Jesus' sayings followed by a number of elaborations *by the author*. But, in *Thomas* we find one of two things: 1) elaborations of *chreia that are presented as Jesus' sayings*, or 2) Jesus' sayings *organized as if they were arguments*. I favor the latter because many of the elaborative sayings seem to me to have been formerly independent sayings. Take, for example, *Thomas* 20 (the Parable of the Mustard Seed): this parable, in my reconstruction (which will be shown

⁷²⁵ J.D. Crossan's groundbreaking work on the sayings tradition of Jesus, *In Fragments*, has proved immensely helpful in my understanding of sayings traditions in general and *Thomas* specifically. J.D. Crossan creates the following typology for the Jesus sayings tradition:

- 1) The "aphoristic core," which retains the initial 'insight' of the aphorism. This core can be experimented with and expressed as "scribal variations" or "performancial variations."
- 2) The "aphoristic saying," which represents the scribal preservation of the initial aphoristic core. This aphoristic saying stage can be divided into five different openings, which I will demonstrate with the aphoristic core "Seek and you will find":
 - Relitival: "Whoever seeks will find."
 - Conditional: "If anyone seeks they will find."
 - Participial: "Anyone who seeks will find."
 - Experiential: "Let the one who seeks continue seeking until he finds."
 - Rhetorical example: "He told them they will find; *For* the one who seeks will find."
- 3) The "aphoristic compound," meaning the juxtaposition of two formerly independent sayings. "What is of important in such *aphoristic compounds* is that (1) the sheer juxtaposition often creates hermeneutical dynamics between the two aphorisms, and (2) verbal and thematic osmosis often occurs from one aphorism into the other" (*ibid.*, 120).
- 4) The "aphoristic cluster": this term is used for "juxtaposition of three or more sayings into a small complex. In itself, therefore, an *aphoristic compound* is a minimal *cluster*" (*ibid.*, 153). Crossan further identifies four strategies for clustering sayings: 1) word, 2) form, 3) theme, or 4) structure.
- 5) The "aphoristic conclusion," which "can be connected in conclusion to just about any other linguistic form imaginable" (*ibid.*, 183).
- 6) The "aphoristic dialogue": "The aphorism is in question and answer format and, while, the answer is not meaningless in itself, the saying's force depends on the dialectic of the question and answer not just on the answer alone" (*ibid.*, 227).
- 7) The "aphoristic story," which is closely related to what I have been detailing in regard to the chreia elaboration in antiquity. Crossan identifies four dialectical stories in *Thomas* (60, 72, 99, and 100) and one aphoristic story in *Thomas* 22.

This method plays prominently in my recovery of the different strata in the sections below.

below), serves as a conclusion; but, it is quite likely that the Parable of the Mustard Seed did not originate in this rhetorical context. I say this because the Parable of the Mustard Seed appears in a number of other contexts (i.e. Mark 4:30-32, Matt 13:31b-32, Luke 13:18-19), which strongly suggests that the Parable of the Mustard Seed was not the elaborative creation of the compiler of *Thomas*. Rather, the initial compiler of the *Thomas* tradition, for the most part, took previously independent sayings of Jesus and sequenced them according to a particular rhetorical and hermeneutical interest. For the initial compiler, did Jesus actually say it exactly like this? Probably not. But, was this what Jesus *meant*? For the initial compiler the answer would probably be in the affirmative. It is in this sense that the initial compiler could think Jesus' thoughts for him; it is in this process that his insights live again. Quintilian also speaks of the empathy and emotive connection that the elaborator must have with his or her quoted character:

Even in the schools it is desirable that the student should be moved by his theme, and should imagine it to be true... Suppose we are impersonating an orphan, a shipwreck man, or one in grave peril. What profit is there in assuming such a role unless we also assume the emotions which it involves?⁷²⁶

This is, I believe, what the initial compiler of the *Thomas* tradition was doing. With the chreia elaborative tradition outlined above, the next task before us is to show how it helps make sense of the *Gospel of Thomas*' enigmatic order.

For generations the enigmatic "Jesus said" formula imposed a sense of order over a seemingly random collection of sayings. For the most part these intermittent "Jesus said" formulas have been ignored. However, I propose that they stand at the very center of the tradition. Within the structural facades of the *Gospel of Thomas* plays a deeper interpretive

⁷²⁶ Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* II.vii.2-4, cited in: Mack, B.L., "Elaboration of the Chreia in the Hellenistic School," 44.

‘clash’ and ‘synthesis.’⁷²⁷ This joining of two disparate traditions represents the interaction between the Palestinian Jesus tradition and the specifically Syrian tradition, which will be detailed in chapter four. In other words, what *Thomas* represents is a stage; and on this stage two hermeneutical schools struggle to either make room for one another, or, more precisely, for the Syrian hermeneutic to dominate the earlier Jesus tradition. This I believe is evinced in the interpretive play and battle being waged between the repetitive “Jesus said” formulas. Before making the case for this Syrian reinterpretation of an earlier Jesus chreia collection, we need to understand the architecture of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The Structural Architecture of the Gospel of Thomas

The *Gospel of Thomas* can be separated into four major structural categories: 1) external rhetorical sequence, 2) internal elaborative expansion, 3) dialectical sequence, and 4) external re-sequencing. The first, external rhetorical sequence, can be observed in the repetitive “Jesus said” formula. This repetitive structure cannot be ignored. When we try to ignore it, we fail to come up with a reason why it was sometimes used, and why it was sometimes not. Rather than ignore the “Jesus said” formula, I put it right at the center of my theory of *Thomas*’ formation. For years I simply ignored its imposition, but I have come to recognize that simply ignoring it does not make it go away. There is, rather, a reason behind the repetitive “Jesus said” formula. If we can entertain the possibility that the “Jesus said” formula represents a distant memory of the initial compilation and order of the *Thomas* tradition we can, I believe, see a reason behind the sequence of *Thomas*. Let us, then, assume, for this chapter, that the repetitive “Jesus said” formulas represent the architectural outline from which the *Gospel of Thomas* was built. Given this assumption, then, the sayings ‘marked’ by the “Jesus said”

⁷²⁷ A clash in the sense of a jarring juxtaposition of very different material, and a synthesis in the sense of a smooth elaborative transition.

formula would represent the initial collection of Jesus sayings in the *Thomas* tradition. However, even in this basic suggestion I have admittedly transgressed my overall theory. I admit this because I believe there are Jesus traditions in *Thomas* that are ‘marked’ by the “Jesus said” formula that *do not belong to the formative stratum* (or: initial chreia collection). Yet, I offer a ‘way out’ of this dilemma by a further specification: the “Jesus said” formula represents not only the initial chreia collection but also the later Syrian tradition that would move to redefine the initial collection (which will be shown below) according to its own ‘Syrian’ hermeneutic. *Thus we have are two ‘competing,’ or perhaps better termed, ‘diverse,’ chreia collections that were joined in what has become known as the Gospel of Thomas.* This will be illustrated below. The baseline of these two traditions -- the Jesus sapiential tradition and the Syrian Edenic/ascetic tradition -- are preserved in the sayings with a prefixed “Jesus said.” I assume, then, that the “Jesus said” formula was prefixed as a way of emphasizing *that* Jesus said *these words*. This is in line with the chreia’s interest in attributing itself to a particular speaker of authority. In other words, these “Jesus said” sayings are powerful *because* Jesus said them. If we follow this thought experiment, the “Jesus said” formulaic prefixes *mark* the ‘original’ traditions: both the sapiential Jesus tradition (which will be outlined below) and the Syrian/Edenic Jesus tradition. The regime of the “Jesus said,” then, represents the initial ‘marking’ of the two primary disparate traditions: the sapiential and the Syrian/Edenic. In sum: the original and new sayings are marked by a “Jesus said” formula, whereas the elaborative moves are marked by dialogical expansions and/or transition phrases such as ‘but,’ ‘for,’ ‘therefore,’ ‘that is why I say...’, etc. This, I believe, is the structure that *Thomas* works with.

After the ‘external rhetorical sequence’ just detailed we have the ‘internal elaborative expansive’ material. These elaborative moves are ‘marked’ literarily by their absence of a

mark. They retain no memory of a “Jesus said” formula but, rather, offer their own *elaborations* of *preexisting material which was marked by the “Jesus said” formula*. In this sense, the elaborative expansions in the second literary architectural principle expand the earlier material marked by the “Jesus said” formula. Let me illustrate this with the tradition in *Thomas* 2:

2.1 Jesus said: “*Let the one who seeks continue seeking until he finds.*”

2.2 *And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed, and he will rule-as-a-king over (the) all* [Greek fragment adds: *and rest*].

If we follow my proposal, *Thomas* 2.1 represents a memory of the initial chreia collection that made up the earliest *Thomas* tradition, whereas *Thomas* 2.2 represents the elaboration of preexisting material. Here, in the above example, my method is readily apparent: *Thomas* 2.1 (which is marked by the “Jesus said” formula) serves as its own coherent saying, but we see *Thomas* 2.2 offer its own elaborative reinterpretation of the *Thomas* 2.1 by appealing to a prior experience with the initial saying in *Thomas* 2.1. Experience implies a previous awareness. This is why *Thomas* 2.2 can explain why later readers can be confident in *Thomas* 2.1. *Thomas* 2.2 explains that the initial searching will be met with challenges and uncertainty, but after this initial disturbance, wonder and awe will triumph -- and after such a triumph the reader will ‘rule’ and ‘rest.’ Between each of the “Jesus said” marks exists much interpretive potential. This elaborative display characterizes a significant portion of the *Gospel of Thomas*, and it will be illustrated in detail below. The “Jesus said” structure marks a referential frame, whereas the space between represents interpretive and experimental freedom.

The third major structural category that operates in the *Gospel of Thomas* is the ‘dialectical.’ In this structure the sayings compounds move beyond the creative and

interpretive potential between two or more sayings toward a structure where the sayings actually 'speak' to one another. Consider an example from *Thomas* 60:

60. <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea.
He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb."
They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat it."
He said to them: "While it is living he will not eat it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (and then he can eat it)."
They said to him: "There is no other way."
He said to them: "*You also*, seek after a place of repose, lest you become corpses and get consumed."

The rhetorical function of the dialogue structure is readily apparent: it persuades by parodying opposing views while also leading the reader or listener to what appears as an obvious conclusion. In the case of *Thomas* 60 the author has Jesus show how living things will inevitably become corpses, which drives toward the author's conclusion: "*You also*, seek after a place of repose, lest you become corpses and get consumed." The dialogical evinces in many instances a pedagogical concern. In the dialogue the sayings no longer have interpretive freedom, but are, rather, sequenced for a particular purpose and it is very difficult to wrench the sayings from the rhetorical flow. The pedagogical trajectory within sayings collections was illustrated by J.D. Crossan in an important chart⁷²⁸ which compares some sayings of Thales in Diogenes Laertius and Plutarch, which I reproduce below:

⁷²⁸ Crossan, J.D., *In Fragments*, 236.

Thales in Diogenes Laertius	Thales in Plutarch
Of all things that are, the most Ancient is God, for he is uncreated	What is the oldest thing? God, said Thales, for God is something that has no beginning
The greatest is space, for it holds all things.	What is greatest? Space, for while the universe contains within it all else, this contains the universe.
The most beautiful is the universe, for it is God's workmanship.	What is most beautiful? The Universe; for everything that is ordered as it should be is a part of it.
The wisest, time, for it brings everything to light.	What is wisest? Time, for is has discovered some things already, and shall discover all the rest.
The strongest, necessity, for it masters all.	What is strongest? Necessity; for that alone is insuperable.

The questions in Plutarch evince a pedagogical concern because they can act as aids to memorization and serve to make the point of the sayings clearer.

The dialectical form can also serve to expose false opinions and misdirected concerns. This use of the dialectical form is quite popular in the major redaction of *Thomas*, as will be shown below. An example of such is *Thomas* 24:

- 24.1 His disciples said: "Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary that we seek after it." He said to them:
24.2 "Whoever has ears to hear, hear!
24.3 There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire world. If that one does not shine, there is darkness."

Jesus in *Thomas* 24 does not answer the question posed by the disciples but, rather, diffuses the question by answering a question that they did not ask. The disciples in *Thomas* 24.1 ask Jesus where he is, which exhibits the disciples' interest in Jesus' unique personage. Jesus' response, however, redirects the question back toward the disciples. In other words, Jesus instructs them to look within themselves, not after him. In this instance the dialectical form uses the initial question to expose its error.

The last structural category operating in *Thomas* is 'external re-sequencing.' When this structure is in play in *Thomas* the former sequence of sayings is disturbed by detaching certain sayings and re-sequencing them before or after other traditions. This phenomenon exhibits the freedom which later interpreters were permitted to apply to the *Gospel of Thomas*. This interpretive re-sequencing is exhibited in two sayings complexes below:

--[6.1 His disciples asked him: "*Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?*"]--
 6.2 Do not tell lies and do not do what you hate.
 6.3 *For* all things are revealed before the presence of heaven.

<<6.1 His disciples asked him: "*Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?*">>
 14.1 Jesus said to them: "*If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits.*"
 14.2 And whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.
 14.3 *For*, what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which issues from your mouth will pollute you.

In the example above, the questions in *Thomas* 6.1 have been dislodged from their answers in *Thomas* 14.1. I will attempt to offer a rationale for this move below, but for our present purposes, I want to just acknowledge that a later redactor has resequenced some material. This is also apparent in two complexes presented in different order in the Greek and Coptic variations on the *Gospel of Thomas* -- they are exhibited below:

<<30. Jesus said: "Where there are three gods, they are Gods, where there are two or one, I am with them.>>
 <<30.2 *Lift the stone, you will find me there. Split the piece of wood, I am there.>>*
 77.1 Jesus said: "I am the light which is above them all, I am the all. (The) all has come forth from me, and (the) all has split open before me."
 <<77.2 // 30.3 *Lift the stone, you will find me there. Split the piece of wood, I am there.>>*

With the structural apparatus of my stratification theory established, I will now turn to the more important task: the demonstration. I will progress along a rather strict methodology which presumes that the “Jesus said” formulas mark the earlier traditions in the initial *Gospel of Thomas*. Yet, it should be noted that this assumption is not the result of an arbitrary decision. Rather, when I entertained the possibility that the “Jesus said” structure generally marked the initial sequence, I was pleasantly surprised to find that a relatively consistent thematic and rhetorical progression manifested itself as I read through the logia. This I will reproduce below. However, before doing so, I need to acknowledge one major inconsistency: there are sayings that have the “Jesus said” formula that I do not include in the earliest stratum. My rationale for doing this will become clear later in this chapter, but for the present purposes in brief, I rationalize this move by my proposing that there are three traditions operating in the *Gospel of Thomas*: the first, and the earliest, is the sapiential material, the second, and the fewest in number, is the judgment material, and the third, the Syrian/Edenic material. The *Gospel of Thomas* is the arena in which these diverse perspectives on Jesus interact with one another. Yet, before outlining this material, I want to acknowledge a particular limitation for this chapter: because the major redaction and its relationship to early Syria is the primary concern of this dissertation, I cannot offer the necessary commentary on the strata preceding the major redaction. However, the recovery and justification for my identification of the major redaction in *Thomas* cannot be made without a brief investigation of the preceding strata. To do such would be like surveying an archaeological dig without any acknowledgment of the topography. The major redaction stands atop preceding layers, but if we ignore its supporting frames it will fall. What will be demonstrated below represents the

first prong in a three-pronged methodology for recovering the major redaction, which I introduced earlier in this chapter. The first, which will be accomplished here, is a literary-rhetorical investigation of the major redaction. In this part of the method, I use chreia elaborative schemes and literary shifts to identify thematic and rhetorical differences that evince the work of the major redactor. The second, which will be accomplished in the next chapter, is a *thematic* investigation. This is where I will make the case that the shared themes in the material recovered *literarily* in this chapter all share a common hermeneutical matrix. The third, which will also be offered in chapter four is the demonstration that the later Syrian traditions share thematic and hermeneutical concerns with the major redactional material rather than the sapiential material -- which helps demonstrate that the major redactional material is later than the sapiential material. With these inefficiencies acknowledged, I am now prepared to move to brief exhibition of the sapiential core.

The Chreia Collection Core

The methodological principles that I use to recover the sapiential core are as follows:

- 1) That the "Jesus said" formula marks an earlier sequence of sayings.
- 2) That conjunctions such as 'for,' 'and,' 'but,' typically mark later elaborations between the repetitive "Jesus said" formulas -- and thus should not be included in the initial chreia collection core.
- 3) That the sayings that follow the "Jesus said" formula have been organized so as to produce a particular meaning.
- 4) That many of the sayings marked by the "Jesus said" formula serve as elaborative arguments for a preceding chreia.

5) That the chreia elaborative scheme charted above is being applied as a general, rather than specific, framework.

Reading notes: the left-hand margin attributes each sayings complex to one of the chreia elaborative steps charted above on page ##. My rationale for this attribution is offered in footnotes, as a way of negotiating the terms of this dissertation. I suggest reading through the primary material as a whole before reading the footnotes.

Seeking and Finding the Kingdom

- Chreia: 2.1 Jesus said: ***“Let the one who seeks continue seeking until he finds.”***⁷²⁹
- Rationale: 3.1 Jesus said: ***“If those who lead you proclaim to you: ‘The Kingdom is in heaven,’
then the birds of heaven will enter before you.
If they proclaim to you: ‘It is in the sea,’
then the fish will enter before you.”***⁷³⁰
- Contrary: 5.1 Jesus said: ***“Recognize what is right in front of your face,***

⁷²⁹ This saying may be an *expansion* of the chreia in *Thomas* 92.1 Jesus said: ***“Seek and you will find.”*** This saying marks the initial chreia as a text interested in ‘seeking after wisdom and the Kingdom (of God).’

⁷³⁰ The initial compiler rationalizes the chreia in *Thomas* 2.1 by parodying those who search for the Kingdom in the heavens by comparing them to birds flying in the heavenly sky and fish in the sea. This is the overall theme of the initial chreia collection: the *Kingdom is not to be sought after as one searches after THINGS*. It must be *recognized* as a condition.

and what is hidden will be revealed to you."⁷³¹

Analogy: 8.1 And he said: "The person compares to a wise fisherman:
He cast his net into the sea
He drew it up from the sea full of little fish from below
And he found *one large* fish
The fisherman was wise
He cast the *little* fish into the sea
He chose the *large* fish without trouble."⁷³²

Example: 9. Jesus said: Look, a Sower went out with a handful and cast (them)
Some fell on the road
The birds came and gathered them
Others fell on the rock
(They) did not take root in the soil or produce ears (up to the sky)
And others fell amongst thorns
They choked the seed and were eaten by worms
And some fell upon good soil
It produced fruit (up to the heavens)
Sixty per measure

⁷³¹ The contrary (or: opposite) statement in *Thomas* 5.1 plays upon the comical comparison in *Thomas* 3.1 by exhorting the reader to simply *recognize what is right in front of his or her own eyes*. This contrary point again parodies those who search for the Kingdom in the heavens, by declaring that it is right in front of the reader or listener. It is important to note that *Thomas* 3.1//5.1 parallels *Thomas* 113:

<i>Thomas</i> 3.1 & 5.1	<i>Thomas</i> 113
"If those who lead you proclaim to you: 'The Kingdom is in heaven,' then the birds of heaven will enter before you. If they proclaim to you: 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will enter before you."	His disciples said to Jesus: "When will the kingdom come?" "It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying, 'Here it is!' or 'Look! There it is.'"
Recognize what is right in front of your face, and what is hidden will be revealed to you.	Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but people don't see it.

This symmetry again suggests that the recognition of the Kingdom in the here and now *is* the overall hermeneutical interest of the initial chreia collection.

⁷³² This parable (or: analogy) serves to support the contrary statement and initial chreia by parodying the search for the Kingdom. Indeed, the Kingdom is found *by idiots* in the initial chreia collection. The fisherman, like the shepherd in *Thomas* 107 *ignore* the 'smaller majority' for the '*largest*' (i.e. most gaudy) minority. The analogy, on face value, is rather pointless: its overt obviousness parallels *Thomas* 5.1 where the Kingdom *is right in front of the seeker's face*. Likewise, the fisherman finds the *largest* fish *right before his face*. The reader or listener is driven to ask: 'How did they miss it?!' 'Its right before their face!' It should also be noted that there is a verbal parallel between the fish in *Thomas* 3.1 and the fish in this parable in *Thomas* 8.1.

One hundred and twenty per measure!⁷³³

Conclusion: 20. The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us, what is the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to?"

He said:

"It compares to a mustard seed *smaller* than all seeds

But when it falls on soil that is cultivated

It produces a *large* branch

And becomes a shelter for the birds of the sky."⁷³⁴

A Kingdom of Children

Question: 21.1 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?"

⁷³³ This parable (or: example) further supports the contrary statement and initial chreia by parodying the search for the Kingdom. Again, the Kingdom *is found by an idiot*. What kind of farmer throws seeds on paths, among thorns, or on stones? A farmer that is bad at his job does. And, yet, despite this action the sower *still finds the Kingdom*. The Kingdom was growing right underneath his nose, but he did not realize it until it had grown. Again, the Kingdom is not in the heavens *but right here*. This is what the reader or listener must recognize: the pursuit of the Kingdom anywhere else is misguided. There also exists a verbal connection between *Thomas* 3.1 and *Thomas* 9 by the word 'heaven' (ΠΕ). (This interpretation derives from conversations with Hal Taussig of Union Theological Seminary).

⁷³⁴ The conclusion (or: exhortation) to the argument initiated in *Thomas* 2.1 is presented in this variation of the Parable of the Mustard Seed. This parable makes sense within the rhetorical progression established in the preceding elaborations: in *Thomas* 3.1 the Kingdom was parodied with birds and fish, in *Thomas* 5.1 the Kingdom was declared to be right in front of our face, in *Thomas* 8.1 the Kingdom was compared to a *fisherman* who finds a *large fish*, in *Thomas* 9 the Kingdom was compared to stupid farmer who plants *seeds* that ascend to the *heavenly sky*, and now in *Thomas* 20 the Kingdom is compared to the *smallest of seeds* which, like a weed, overtakes the field in which it is sown, produces a branch and brings the *birds* mentioned in *Thomas* 3.1. In this parable the Kingdom is a *weed* sown in a garden; though it is small it will grow and produce shelter for the birds. In this parable a *weed becomes a shelter*. This will also happen in the chreia that follows in *Thomas* 21.2: He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs." The Kingdom in *Thomas* 20 *is right before the listener's face*. The lesson, then, is: 'Seek and you will find the Kingdom, for it is right in front of you. Don't look for it in the heavens or the sea -- rather, recognize it right before you.' Beyond the coherent thematic development, this first chreia elaborative complex exhibits a verbal order:

Thomas 3.1 -- birds

-- fish

Thomas 8.1 -- fish

Thomas 9 -- birds

-- seed

Thomas 20 -- seed

-- birds

In *Thomas* 20 we find the 'correct' response to the chreia in *Thomas* 2.1 and the contrary statement in *Thomas* 5.1. In *Thomas* 8 the Kingdom is compared to a person searching for something *large*, but in *Thomas* 20 we learn that the better comparison for the Kingdom is something that *is the smallest*. The initial chreia collection will show, through many of its parables, that it is not the large and gaudy things the Kingdom exists in but in the *small* things that are right before everyone's face, but are ignored (much like the small fish, the poor people who are blessed in *Thomas* 54, and the children in the rhetorical section that follows in *Thomas* 21.1-2).

Chreia: 21.2 He said: “They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs.”⁷³⁵

Example: 22.1 Jesus saw little children being nursed. He said to his disciples: “These little children are like those who enter the kingdom.”⁷³⁶

Love of Neighbor

Chreia: 25. Jesus said: “Love your brother like your soul. Guard him like the pupil of your eye (ὁ ὀφθαλμός).”

Rationale: 26. Jesus said: “You see the sliver in your brother’s eye (ὁ ὀφθαλμός), but you fail to see the plank that is in your own eye (ὁ ὀφθαλμός). When you remove the plank

⁷³⁵ This initial mixed chreia (or: responsive chreia) continues the theme of unwanted weeds (i.e. mustard) in a garden, but this time in the context of Jesus’ followers and the conditions of a landless tenant in the first century. The disciples in *Thomas* 21.2 are compared to subversive children. This saying provides an important juxtaposition of themes: subversiveness and innocence. The children are, technically speaking, in violation of ancient law, because they have commandeered a field *that was not theirs*. Yet, they are subtly proclaimed innocent by their comparison to children. Children can do things with great confidence and with little thought -- but they are innocent. They, unlike their elders, can recognize the Kingdom right before their faces. In the initial chreia collection, subversiveness was allied with innocence. Those who can be both, enter the Kingdom like children. It is also quite likely that this parable represents an aphoristic presentation of the Parable of the Tenants in *Thomas* 65: Jesus said: A usurer owned a vineyard.

He leased it so some tenants so that they would work it and he take the fruit from their hands.

He sent his slave to collect the fruit of the vineyard.

They seized his slave. They beat him, almost to the point of death.

The slave went back to his master and told him (about what had happened).

His master said: ‘Perhaps he (the slave) did not know them (the tenants).’

He sent another slave.

The tenants beat that one was well.

Then the master sent his son.

He said: ‘Perhaps they will be shamed before my son.’

The tenants, since they knew he was the heir to the vineyard, seized him and killed him.

There is also a verbal connection between *Thomas* 20 and 21.2 with the word ‘field.’

⁷³⁶ This saying supports the chreia in *Thomas* 21.2 as an example. It reiterates the declaration that the Kingdom belongs to innocent children.

from your own eye (ΒΑΛ) then you will be able to see (ΝΑΥ) clearly enough to remove the sliver from your brother's eye (ΒΑΛ)."⁷³⁷

Contrary: 31. Jesus said: "**No prophet is accepted in his own village. No physician heals those who know him.**"

Overcoming the City

Chreia: 32. Jesus said: "**They are building a city upon an *elevated* mountain and fortifying it! It cannot fall – *but it also cannot be hidden.***"⁷³⁸

Rationale: 33.1 Jesus said: "**What you hear in your ear declare with the other ear from your *rooftops.***"⁷³⁹

Contrary: 34. Jesus said: "***If* a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a pit.**"⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁷ These two sayings from the formative stratum were juxtaposed *according to word*: ΒΑΛ, eye. *Thomas* 25 is expressed: *in the form of a maxim*; *Thomas* 26 is expressed: *in the manner of an explanation*. *Thomas* 26 rationalizes *Thomas* 25 by showing why it is right to protect one's brother like the pupil of one's eye. In the rationale in *Thomas* 26 the reader learns what happens when one does not protect his own eye: he will get a 'plank of wood' stuck in it. But, because this 'brother' was stupid, he sought to 'heal' and 'correct' his brother while he all along *could not see well enough to notice that he had a plank in his eye*. First, the person needed to be 'healed' by his brother, then he could help 'heal' the brother -- hence the statement from the opposite in *Thomas* 31: "**No prophet is accepted in his own village. No physician heals those who know him.**" The brothers can't heal each other because they *know* each other. Thus what one must do is overcome this unfortunate situation by 'Loving your brother like your soul and guarding him like the pupil of your eye.'

⁷³⁸ This initial chreia juxtaposes two themes: invincibility and exposure. Accordingly, then, fortified invincibility can be overcome by *exposing* the city. It is cannot be hidden, and therefore it cannot remain impenetrable. The latter clause suggests that this building project is *not* a welcome sight. It is, rather, a sign of oppression -- its imposing shadow cast on those below precipitates a saying such as this.

⁷³⁹ The rationale in *Thomas* 33.1 responds to the final clause in *Thomas* 32 -- that it cannot be hidden -- by declaring that people should listen to what is being said and announce it from their rooftops. It seems that there is a parallel between the city's 'elevated' position and the announcing 'from the rooftops.'

⁷⁴⁰ This statement from the opposite suggests that if one does not announce from the rooftops what one hears, then it will be as if the 'blind were leading the blind.' Those who can see, according to the initial compiler, are the ones that must *lead* -- and those who 'see' are those who announce what they hear (about the elevated city).

Example: 35. Jesus said: **"It is not possible for someone to enter the house of a powerful man and take it by force without binding his hands. Then he will loot his house."**⁷⁴¹

Conclusion: 36. Jesus said, **"Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, [about your food, about what you're going to eat, or about your clothing--] what you are going to wear."**

Hindrances Before the Kingdom

Chreia: 39.1 Jesus said: **"The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge and hidden them. They do not enter nor do they permit those who desire to enter to enter."**⁷⁴²

Contrary: 40. Jesus said: **"A grapevine has been planted outside the Father. Since it is not supported, it will be pulled up from the roots and will be destroyed."**⁷⁴³

Analogy: 41. Jesus said: **"Whoever has something in his hand, more will be given. And whoever has nothing, even the little that person has will be taken away from that person."**⁷⁴⁴

Judgment: 42. Jesus said: **"Be passers-by."**⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴¹ This example parallels the chreia in *Thomas* 32: just as the city cannot fall unless it is *exposed*, so also a brigand cannot succeed in looting the house of a powerful man unless he bind the hands of the powerful man. The city and powerful man share an apparent sense of invincibility -- but, the point of the elaboration is to suggest that such invincibility is a facade. Both the city and the powerful man are vulnerable. But to assail them requires faith: this is why the conclusion exhorts those who listen or read to be confident. Worrying is problematic, one must trust. By choosing *not* to worry, many more possibilities open up.

⁷⁴² This initial chreia sets the elaborative stage by presenting a problem: the 'way' into the Kingdom has been blocked by the Pharisees.

⁷⁴³ This statement from the opposite compares the Pharisees to a grapevine that had been planted outside the domain (or permission) of the Father (God). They will, according to this rhetorical sequence, be removed from their position of hiding the knowledge of the Kingdom. It should be noted that this rhetorical swipe need not play only against the Pharisees and scribes but all leaders that 'hide' the keys to the Kingdom (cf. *Thomas* 3.1).

⁷⁴⁴ The analogy in *Thomas* 41 represents an ancient version of the modern proverb, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer." In this case it is being applied to the initial chreia in *Thomas* 39.1 Just as the Pharisees and scribes have taken from those who have nothing, so also in *Thomas* 41 those who have nothing lose even the little they have.

⁷⁴⁵ *Thomas* 42 represents the *solution* to the problem presented in *Thomas* 39: one must 'pass by' the hinderances of the Pharisees and scribes.

Conclusion: 45.1 Jesus said: **"Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs picked from thistles, for they do not bear fruit."**⁷⁴⁶

John the Baptist and the Jesus Movement

Chreia: 46.1 Jesus said: **"From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women, no one is honored more than John the Baptist, (so that) his eyes need not be averted."**⁷⁴⁷

Contrary: 47.1 Jesus said: **"It is impossible for a person to mount two horses and to draw two bows."**⁷⁴⁸

Conclusion: 48. Jesus said: **"If two make peace with each other in the same house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move away!' and it will move."**⁷⁴⁹

A Kingdom of the Poor (Against the Rich)

Chreia: 54. Jesus said: **"Blessed are the poor, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."**

Rationale: 55.1 Jesus said: **"Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot be a disciple of mine."**⁷⁵⁰

Analogy: 57. Jesus said:
**The kingdom of the Father compares to a man who had good seed
His enemy came in the night
He sowed a weed amidst the good seed
The man did not permit them to pull up the weed**

⁷⁴⁶ This conclusion stands as a confirmation of the statement from the opposite in *Thomas* 40. In *Thomas* 40 the 'grapevine' was to be pulled up, and here in *Thomas* 45.1 it is declared that 'grapes' are not harvested from thorns (i.e. scribes and Pharisees) for they do not 'bear fruit.' One must 'pass by' this situation.

⁷⁴⁷ This initial chreia in *Thomas* 46.1 appears to have derived from an era when the Jesus movement was still part of (or at least associated with) the Baptist movement.

⁷⁴⁸ This statement from the opposite indicates that the compiler was aware that the two movements had grown apart, hence the contrary comparison of a person trying to mount two horses or draw two bows at the same time being compared to following both John the Baptist and Jesus.

⁷⁴⁹ This conclusion exhorts the two movements (i.e. the Jesus and John movements) to make peace with one another, for when they do they will be able 'to move mountains.' In this sense the elaborative progression drives toward reconciliation, not estrangement.

⁷⁵⁰ This rationale indicates that the 'poor' in *Thomas* 54 are a social-class rather than familial group. Just as one must be poor to be in the Kingdom, so also must one leave their family in order to follow Jesus, who teaches about the Kingdom of God. The family-less and the poor share the condition of vulnerability.

He said to them: 'When you go to pull up the weed you may also pull up
the good seed

On the day of the harvest the weeds will be visible
(Then) they pull them up and burn them.'⁷⁵¹

Analogy: 63.1 Jesus said:

There was a rich man who had an abundance of money

He said: 'I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, and
plant

And fill my storehouse

So that I lack nothing'

Such were his intentions, but that very night he died!⁷⁵²

Analogy: 64.1 Jesus said:

A man had guests.

When he had prepared the dinner, he sent his slave to invite the guests

He came to the first person

He said: 'My master invites you'

He responded: 'I have money for some merchants who are
coming to me this evening and I must place my orders. I
cannot attend the dinner.'

He went to another person

He said: 'My master invites you'

He responded: 'I just bought a house and am required for the
day. I cannot attend.'

He went to another person

He said: 'My master invites you'

He responded: 'My friend is getting married, and I am in
charge of preparing the meal. I cannot attend the dinner.'

He went to another person

He said: 'My master invites you'

He responded: 'I have purchased a field and am going to
collect the rent. I cannot come. Please excuse me.'

The slave left.

⁷⁵¹ The parables that follow the initial chreia all show that the blessing on the poor cuts both ways: positively for the poor, but negatively for the rich. These three parables are more about *loss* than gain. In this initial chreia collection sequence the wealthy landowner always loses. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels these three parables are not provided an allegorical interpretation. They stand, rather, on their own as stories. In the Parable of the Weeds here in *Thomas* 57 the landowner refuses the advice that his slaves or tenants give him. He chooses, rather, to wait until the harvest. But, this is a very risky move. Most farmers understand that it is unwise to let the weeds choke the wheat, as there is a strong chance that they will ruin much of the harvest. Moreover, one must wonder why it is that this landowner had enemies. Were they former tenants, a rival landowner, or a group of people that had been dislodged from their land?

⁷⁵² This analogy leaves no room for doubt: the landowner loses everything, including his life.

He said to his master: 'The people you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.'
The master said to his slave: 'Go outside on the streets. Whoever you find, bring them in so that they may dine.'⁷⁵³

Analogy: 65.1 Jesus said:
A usurer owned a vineyard.
He leased it to some tenants so that they would work it and he take the fruit from their hands.
He sent his slave to collect the fruit of the vineyard.
They seized his slave. They beat him, almost to the point of death.
The slave went back to his master and told him (about what had happened).
His master said: 'Perhaps he (the slave) did not know them (the tenants).'

He sent another slave.
The tenants beat that one as well.
Then the master sent his son.
He said: 'Perhaps they will be shamed before my son.'

The tenants, since they knew he was the heir to the vineyard, seized him and killed him.⁷⁵⁴

Authority: 66. Jesus said: "Show me the stone that the builders rejected – *that* one is the cornerstone."⁷⁵⁵

Conclusion: 68.1 Jesus said: "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted."

Conclusion: 69.1 Jesus said: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted within their hearts. They are the ones who have truly known the Father."⁷⁵⁶

The Problem of Land Ownership

⁷⁵³ In this parable we learn about a number of types of people that are not part of the Kingdom: the merchants, estate-holders, and absentee landlords. But, the meal is opened to the poor who populate the streets. They, who are poor, are like the poor who are blessed in the initial chreia.

⁷⁵⁴ Again, we learn that the beatitude for the poor also cuts against the rich. It seems, for the early compiler, a Kingdom for the poor implies a Kingdom that has no room for the rich. The landowner loses almost everything: a slave, a son, and, presumably, a vineyard.

⁷⁵⁵ This statement from authority quoting Psalm 118:22 declares that the poor (like the rejected stone) who have been rejected are in fact *the cornerstone*.

⁷⁵⁶ This conclusion supports and reiterates the initial chreia: the Kingdom is for the poor, who are persecuted. The second chreia in *Thomas* 69.1 may be a variation on the more familiar beatitude: "Blessed are those who mourn."

- Chreia: 72. A man said to Jesus: **"Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me."**
 He said to him: **"Oh sir, who has made me a divider?"**
 He turned to his disciples and said: **"I am not a divider am I?"**⁷⁵⁷
- Rationale: 73. Jesus said: **"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord that he might send forth laborers to the harvest."**⁷⁵⁸
- Analogy: 76.1 Jesus said:
The realm of the Father is compared to a merchant who had some merchandise
He found a pearl
That merchant was wise
He sold the merchandise
Then he purchased the pearl for *himself alone*.⁷⁵⁹
- Conclusion: 78. Jesus said: **"Why have you come out to the field? To see a reed shaken by the wind and to see someone dressed in soft clothes [like your kings] and powerful men? They are dressed in soft clothes, but they don't know the truth."**⁷⁶⁰

Following the Word of God, Following the Word of Jesus

⁷⁵⁷ This mixed chreia is expressed with wit, as the final clause suggests that this response was facetious. Jesus asks whether he is a 'divider' precisely because he was known as a divider (cf. *Thomas* 16) -- hence the person's question. This chreia follows the thematic development introduced in *Thomas* 65 with the Parable of the Tenants: division of land and poverty. The saying also recalls the beginning of the Parable of the Prodigal, when the son asks his father for his division of the inheritance

⁷⁵⁸ The rationale for the responsive chreia in *Thomas* 72 is presented here in *Thomas* 73: Jesus has no need to divide inheritance or land because there is more than enough for everyone -- 'the harvest is abundant.'

⁷⁵⁹ In this analogy the Kingdom is again compared to an idiot. The merchant sells all he has for a paltry pearl. As *Thomas* 3.1//5.1 and *Thomas* 113 make clear: *this is not how one finds the Kingdom*. The Kingdom in *Thomas* 113 "is spread out upon the earth, but people don't see it." The Kingdom cannot be discovered as a merchant discovers a pearl -- nor can it be *owned selfishly* as the merchant does in *Thomas* 76.1. The motives of the man asking Jesus to divide his property is exemplified in the selfish actions of the merchant.

⁷⁶⁰ This chreia recalls the field that the children settled in in *Thomas* 21.2, the field that a wealthy man bought in *Thomas* 64, and the field/vineyard in the Parable of the Tenants in *Thomas* 65. Unlike the Synoptic tradition, this saying has nothing to do with John the Baptist, but is being used as a conclusion to the initial chreia in *Thomas* 72. The man in *Thomas* 72 is being challenged for even coming out to the field (presumably like the one in *Thomas* 21.2 and/or *Thomas* 65). The final statement is what drives Jesus' critique of landownership: They (the kings and powerful men) are dressed in soft clothes, but they don't know the truth." In the preceding parables and sayings, it is clear that in the initial chreia collection Jesus is against kings, people of (political) power, and absentee landowners. The harvest is abundant, Jesus says, so why is there a need for landownership? This is the point. The merchant and the man asking for a division of inheritance are looking for the Kingdom as wealthy people search for profit -- *but this is not how the Kingdom is discovered*: it "is spread out upon the earth, but people don't see it" (*Thomas* 113).

- Praise: 79.1 A woman in the crowd said to him: “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you.”
- Chreia: He said to her: “Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it.”⁷⁶¹
- Contrary: 86. Jesus said: “[The foxes have] their dens and the birds have their nests, but the son of man has no place to lay down his head and rest (ḤTON).”⁷⁶²
- Authority/
Conclusion 90.1 Jesus said: “Come to me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is gentle. <<90.2 And you will find [rest] (ḤTON) for yourselves.”>>⁷⁶³

Seek and Finding in a World of Lending and Usury

- Chreia: 92.1 Jesus said: “Seek and you will find.”
- Rationale: 94. Jesus said: “Whoever seeks will find. [Whoever knocks] they will open to that one.”⁷⁶⁴
- Contrary: 95. Jesus said: “If you have money, do not lend it at interest. Rather, lend it to someone who won’t pay you back.”⁷⁶⁵
- Analogy: 96. Jesus said:
The kingdom of the Father is compared to a woman (C21ME)

⁷⁶¹ In this responsive mixed chreia Jesus responds to the woman’s praise with wit. In this quick retort, Jesus redirects the woman’s praise from him to the Father.

⁷⁶² This statement from the opposite plays on the woman’s praise of the body (i.e. breasts) that nursed him. This statement from the opposite catches the irony of the initial praise: only humans (i.e. the sons of Adam) are homeless in the world. Thus this world is somehow unbalanced, and at times cruel.

⁷⁶³ This conclusion plays on the statement from the opposite in *Thomas* 86. There we found humanity having no where to lay its heads and *rest*. Here in *Thomas* 90.2, if I am correct in assuming that a later redactor changed ḤTON (rest) to ἈΝΑΥΠΑCIC (repose) to change the meaning (which will be shown below), then the original ḤTON would parallel the ḤTON in *Thomas* 86. In this elaborative progression one follows the ‘word of the Father’ and comes to Jesus to ‘rest’ his or her head. This conclusion also acts as a subtle ‘statement from authority’ from *Ben Sirach* 51:34-35.

⁷⁶⁴ This rationale transforms the aphorism into a proverbial statement. One can be assured in seeking and finding because it has been done before: *Whoever* seeks will find. The rationale also provides a further example of fortunate discovery: *Whoever* knocks, they will open to that one.

⁷⁶⁵ Because one can be confident in finding (what one needs), there is no need to depend on the dishonest practice of usury. Rather, with complete confidence, it is best to exhibit one’s lack of concern for financial stability: *give to the one who cannot pay you back*. This saying certainly echoes the Jesus Prayer: ‘Forgive us our debts to the extent that we forgive the debts of others.’ The practice of usury was very oppressive in the ancient world, so it should not be surprising that Jesus maligns it. Cf. H. Taussig, *Jesus Before God: The Prayer Life of the Historical Jesus* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1999), see especially chapter nine.

**She took a little yeast and hid it in dough
She made the loaves into leavened bread!⁷⁶⁶**

Example: 97. Jesus said:
The kingdom of the Father is compared to a woman (C2IME) carrying a [jar] filled with meal.
While she was walking on the road a ways out, the handle of the jar broke.
The meal emptied out along the road, but she did not realize it or recognize a problem.⁷⁶⁷

Conclusion: 98. Jesus said:
The kingdom of the Father is compared to someone who wanted to kill a powerful man.
He drew his sword in his house
He stabbed the wall in order to see whether his hand might (have the stomach to) hold steady
Then he slew the powerful man.⁷⁶⁸

The Family of God

⁷⁶⁶ This analogy shows how interest on money works: a woman 'conceals yeast' (which, in a Jewish context, suggests that she is doing something wrong) in some dough and it expands beyond imagination. This is how interest works: one 'puts in' only a little, but earns much more than one deserves.

⁷⁶⁷ This example presents the other side of usury. In the first example in *Thomas* 96, the woman 'makes a lot' and 'finds much,' but here in the second example, the woman 'loses a lot' and 'finds nothing.'

⁷⁶⁸ This conclusion acts as a warning against usury: the powerful man (who is associated with the wealthy and the usurer [cf. *Thomas* 64, 65, 78]) loses his life at the hands of a peasant. The assassin's peasant status is alluded to by his stabbing his sword into a wall, which suggests a peasant's typical dirt wall. It is not good to be a powerful man or wealthy person in Jesus' parables. In each of the parables the seekers find, but what they find was not what they may have been expecting.

<i>Thomas</i> 63.1	<i>Thomas</i> 98
There was a rich man who had an abundance of money.	The kingdom of the Father is compared to someone who wanted to kill a powerful man.
He said: 'I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, and plant And fill my storehouse So that I lack nothing.'	He drew his sword in his house. He stabbed the wall in order to see whether his hand might (have the stomach to) hold steady.
Such were his intentions, but that very night he died!	Then he slew the powerful man.

- Question: 99. The disciples said to him: "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."
- Chreia: He said to them: "Those who do the will of my Father, they are my brothers and my mother. They are (truly) the ones who enter the kingdom of my Father."⁷⁶⁹
- Rationale: 100.1 They showed Jesus a coin and said to him: "Caesar's people demand taxes from us." He said to them: "Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, (but) give God what is God's."⁷⁷⁰
- Contrary: 101.1 Jesus said: "Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother in the same way I do, cannot be a [disciple] of mine."⁷⁷¹
- Analogy: 103. Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who knows where the thieves are going to enter, so that [he] might arise and assemble his estate-(kingdom), and prepare himself."⁷⁷²
- Conclusion: 104. They said to Jesus: "Come, today let us pray and fast." Jesus said: "What sin have I committed, or where have I been defeated?"⁷⁷³

Seeking and Finding the Kingdom

- Chreia: 107. Jesus said:
The kingdom compares to a shepherd who had a hundred sheep
One of them, the *largest*, went astray
He left the (other) ninety-nine

⁷⁶⁹ This chreia echoes that of *Thomas* 79.1: in both instances Jesus redirects all attention to the Father. In *Thomas* 99 Jesus challenges the ancient patriarchal system by expanding the notion of 'family' to include all who do the will of the Father.

⁷⁷⁰ Just as Jesus is not attached to the patriarchal notions of family, so also is he not attached to Caesar's money. For Jesus, money is a game that people play: Jesus calls his followers to not 'play the game.' Money has no intrinsic value when it is taken out of circulation -- out of the game.

⁷⁷¹ This statement from the opposite drives the initial insight of *Thomas* 99 further. It declares not only detachment from family, but *required* detachment from family. Moreover, this is expressed by *hatred*, not just separation. Such a statement is quite revolutionary in the Greco-Roman world.

⁷⁷² This saying represents a variation on the earlier form of the example preserved in *Thomas* 21.5: "If the householder knows that a thief is coming, he will keep watch before he comes. He will not let him break into his house, his estate-kingdom, to steal his possessions." In this rhetorical sequence, the saying portrays the 'demands of the world' (i.e. taxes, familial responsibilities) as 'thieves' attempting to assault the reader or listener.

⁷⁷³ This conclusion plays on the perceived 'sin' of hating mother and father (which goes against the Commandments). Jesus proclaims, with the characteristic wit of the sage, that he has not sinned, and thus does not need to fast or pray.

He sought after that one until he found it
 After such an effort, he said to the sheep:
 'I love you *more* than the (other) ninety-nine.'⁷⁷⁴

Rationale: 109.1 Jesus said:
 The kingdom compares to a man who had in his field a hidden treasure,
 but he was unaware of it.
 And [after] his death, he left it to his son
 The son was also unaware (of the treasure)
 He took the field and sold [it]
 The one who bought the field went plowing and found the treasure.⁷⁷⁵

Conclusion: 113.1 His disciples said to Jesus: "When will the kingdom come?"
 113.2 "It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying,
 'Here it is!' or 'Look! There it is.'
 113.3 Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but
 people don't see it."⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷⁴ This parable acts as the initial *frame* of the parable in *Thomas* 113, and it compares the Kingdom to a shepherd, who like the fisherman in *Thomas* 8, plays the fool searching for a 'large' item at the expense of the small things right in front of his face. This shepherd, like the sower in *Thomas* 9, is *not* good at his job. He leaves the flock for the *largest* sheep at the expense and risk of the other ninety-nine. He leaves the other ninety-nine because he loved the largest sheep more than all the others. This is *not* how the Kingdom is found in the initial chreia collection -- as *Thomas* 113 will declare: It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying, 'Here it is!' or 'Look! There it is' *For it is right in front of everyone's face*. There is *no* searching for the Kingdom, only *recognition* of the Kingdom's presence.

⁷⁷⁵ While in the Synoptic tradition this parable is used to show how people find the Kingdom, but here in the initial chreia collection in *Thomas*, the parable shows *how not* to look for the Kingdom. One does not find the Kingdom as one finds treasure or inheritance -- these all involve *things*. Rather the Kingdom is spread out on the earth before everyone. The Kingdom cannot be controlled or purchased, it can only be realized.

⁷⁷⁶ This conclusion sums up not only the present rhetorical progression begun in *Thomas* 107, but the entire initial chreia collection begun in *Thomas* 2.1. The Kingdom is not to be sought after as one would search after fish, pearls, sheep, treasure, or money -- it is rather, "spread out upon the earth, but people don't see it."

<i>Thomas</i> 3.1 & 5.1	<i>Thomas</i> 113
"If those who lead you proclaim to you: 'The Kingdom is in heaven,' then the birds of heaven will enter before you. If they proclaim to you: 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will enter before you."	His disciples said to Jesus: "When will the kingdom come?" "It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying, 'Here it is!' or 'Look! There it is.'"
Recognize what is right in front of your face, and what is hidden will be revealed to you.	Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but people don't see it.

While space does not permit a thorough investigation of this initial chreia collection (which it deserves), a few general observations can be made:

1) The Kingdom (Imperial Rule, Realm, or Reign) of God (Father) is both *fully present* and absolutely *immanent*.

2) Because the Kingdom is already present and spread upon the earth, one cannot search for it as one searches for money, fish, treasure, sheep, or wealth. For this reason many of the parables are examples of *what not to do*.

3) The Kingdom of the poor and persecuted has no room for the wealthy -- this was made clear in many of the parables. In this initial chreia collection it is not good to be a usurer, absentee landowner, or wealthy person.

4) To be part of the Kingdom Jesus proclaims, one must join a new family -- the family of the Father -- and *leave* (i.e. hate) one's own family. Yet, one must also guard his brother as one guards the pupil of his own eye.

5) There is an acknowledgment that Jesus honored John more than anyone else. Yet, there is also an acknowledgement that the Jesus and Baptist movements had grown apart, and perhaps competed with one another. However, the initial chreia collection core exhorts the two movements to 'make peace' with each other.

Beyond these very general remarks, it is important to note the symmetry operating within the initial chreia collection:

Seeking and Finding the Kingdom
 A Kingdom of Children
 Love of Neighbor
 Overcoming the City
 Hinderances Before the Kingdom
 Jesus and John
 A Kingdom of the Poor
 The Problem of Land Ownership
 Following the Word of God, Following Jesus
 Seeking and Finding in a World of Usury and Lending
 The Family of God
 Seeking and Finding the Kingdom

The collection oscillates between 'seeking and finding the Kingdom' and the 'poor' the Kingdom is for. However, it is important to note that this chreia collection *combines* Jesus' remembered chreia, but it does not presume to present Jesus' actual thoughts. The collector may have thought it did, but such a discussion is for a future study. What is clear is that different juxtapositions and sequences of these 'familiar' Jesus sayings drastically change their meanings. This is both the genius and power of the initial chreia collection.

With the chreia collection core set before us, we are now prepared to observe the operations of the second structural category: internal 'elaborative expansion.' As outlined above, within the disparate "Jesus said" formulas exists a 'space' for continued or new elaborations and meaning-making moves. This is what is meant by 'internal elaborative expansion' -- by 'internal' I am referring to the space between the "Jesus said" formulas, by 'elaborative' I mean extended meaning, and by 'expansion' I mean posterior to the initial chreia collection. It is important to note that these secondary expansions can operate *without regard to the earlier rhetorical sequence* outline above. I term this stratum the 'expanded chreia collection' -- and it is here that new interpretive freedoms reign. I term, for simplicity's sake, the author of the expanded chreia collection the 'minor redactor' -- yet, I readily admit that there may have been more than one hand responsible for these elaborative moves (or even that

some of these elaborative moves originated with the initial chreia core outlined above). I will again briefly guide the reader through the places in the text where this expansion is occurring. The methodological principles that I use to recover the expanded chreia collection are as follows:

1) No sayings that begin with the framing structure “Jesus said” are admitted into this stratum. This presumes that the later elaborative activity operated *between* the “Jesus said” structures. This makes sense of why these sayings do not have the “Jesus said” formula attached.

2) The elaborative fragment should not evince any of the major redactional themes or vocabulary (which will be discussed below).

Reading notes: The **boldfaced** font represents the initial chreia collection core, and it is aligned to the righthand side of the page. The red font indicates the elaborations from the expanded chreia collection stratum, and it is also indented to the right. As in the initial chreia collection core outline above, the justification (if needed) for my attribution of the given saying fragment to the expanded chreia stratum are given in footnotes as the limits on this dissertation require.

The Expanded Chreia Collection

2.1 Jesus said: “***Let the one who seeks continue seeking until he finds.***”

3.1 Jesus said: “***If those who lead you proclaim to you: ‘The Kingdom is in heaven,’***

then the birds of heaven will enter before you.

***If they proclaim to you: ‘It is in the sea,’
then the fish will enter before you.”***

Contrary: 3.2. *Rather*, the kingdom is within you and beyond you.⁷⁷⁷

Conclusion: 4.2 *For* many who are first will be last.⁷⁷⁸

5.1 Jesus said: ***“Recognize what is right in front of your face,
and what is hidden will be revealed to you.”***

Rationale: 5.2 *For*, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.⁷⁷⁹

Contrary: 6.2 Do not tell lies and do not do what you hate.⁷⁸⁰

Conclusion: 6.3 *For* all things are revealed before the presence of heaven.⁷⁸¹

8.1 And he said: ***“The person compares to a wise fisherman:
He cast his net into the sea
He drew it up from the sea full of little fish from below***

⁷⁷⁷ A hermeneutical variation on *Thomas* 113.3: “Rather, the Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but people don’t see it.” The minor redactor here expresses an interest in ‘internalizing’ some of the sayings of Jesus. In this case, the Kingdom went from being ‘spread out on the earth’ to being not only outside of the reader but also *within*. This expansion also parallels and supports the chreia in *Thomas* 5.1: “Recognize what is right in front of your face, *and* what is hidden will be revealed to you.”

⁷⁷⁸ This form of expansion is paralleled in *Thomas* 5.2 and 6.3. Chreia exercise employed: *comment*. Chreia expressed: *in the manner of a maxim*. This saying captures the irony of the person in *Thomas* 3.1 who searches for the Kingdom in the Heavens actually ends up *last* in the Kingdom -- thus: ‘the first will be last.’

⁷⁷⁹ The minor redactor has offered a *rationale* for the saying in *Thomas* 5.1 according to experience with the saying. In this sense, according to the expanded chreia collection, the saying in *Thomas* 5.1 was no longer an imperative but an experienced ‘fact.’ In other words: one can be certain of the promise of *Thomas* 5.1 because there are already people who have experienced the truthfulness of the aphorism; thus it can be proclaimed that “there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.”

⁷⁸⁰ In the minor redaction this aphorism followed *Thomas* 5.2. This sequencing makes sense within the context of a chreia collection: in *Thomas* 5.1 the reader is encouraged to discover what is right in front of his face and in 5.2 is provided a promise that “there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed” -- and in *Thomas* 6.2, likewise, the reader is to simply not hate or lie -- “*For* all things are revealed before the presence of heaven.” *Thomas* 6.2 exhibits what a life that has recognized the kingdom (before one’s face) actually looks like. In praxis, the recognition of the Kingdom is *lived* according to the Golden Rule. Chreia expressed: *in the manner of a maxim*.

⁷⁸¹ In the expanded chreia collection, following the insertion of *Thomas* 5.2, the minor redactor inserted *Thomas* 6.3 as a means of closing the argument, which ran as follows:

3.1 “If those who lead you proclaim to you: ‘The Kingdom is in heaven,’ then the birds of heaven will enter before you. If they proclaim to you: ‘It is in the sea,’ then the fish will enter before you.”

3.2. *Rather*, the kingdom is within you and beyond you.

4.2 *For* many who are first will be last.

5.1 Recognize what is right in front of your face, and what is hidden will be revealed to you.

5.2 *For*, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.

6.2 Do not tell lies and do not do what you hate.¹⁵

6.3 *For* all things are revealed before the presence of heaven.

Chreia expressed: *in the manner of a maxim*.

And he found *one large* fish
The fisherman was wise
He cast the little fish into the sea
He chose the *large* fish without trouble.”

Conclusion: 8.2 Whoever has ears to hear, listen!⁷⁸²

9. Jesus said: Look, a Sower went out with a handful and cast (them)
Some fell on the road
The birds came and gathered them
Others fell on the rock
(They) did not take root in the soil or produce ears (up
to the sky)
And others fell amongst thorns
They choked the seed and were eaten by worms
And some fell upon good soil
It produced fruit (up to the heavens)
Sixty per measure
One hundred and twenty per measure!

Question: <<6.1 His disciples asked him: “Do you want us to fast? In what way
should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not
eat?”>>⁷⁸³

Contrary: 14.1 Jesus said to them: “If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves.
And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will
do harm to your spirits.”

Example: 14.2 *And* whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if
they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick
among them.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸² The minor redactor, it seems, inserted this stitch as an *exhortation* to listen to the stories. Opening applied: *relitival*. Chreia exercise employed: *exhortation*.

⁷⁸³ This may have been where *Thomas* 6.1 was formerly juxtaposed. Clearly the questions in *Thomas* 6.1 and the answers in *Thomas* 14.1 belong together. In the expanded chreia collection this complex followed the Parable of the Sower in *Thomas* 9 and preceded the saying in *Thomas* 14.2. This move was made by the minor redactor in order to justify the scandalous behavior in *Thomas* 14.2. This justification and rationale for the behavior in 14.2 is further elaborated in *Thomas* 14.3. According to the minor redactor, a disciple need not concern herself with dietary restrictions because Jesus has done away with them as a means of exposing false humility and religious obligation.

⁷⁸⁴ This saying operates as an example of a way of life that is unconcerned with dietary and religious restrictions. It is possible that this saying reflects the activity of some of the early Jesus followers (cf. Patterson, S., *Jesus and the Gospel of Thomas*, especially part two). Chreia exercise employed: *example*.

Rationale: 14.3 *For*, what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which issues from your mouth will pollute you.⁷⁸⁵

20. The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us, what is the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to?"

He said:

"It compares to a mustard seed *smaller* than all seeds

But when it falls on soil that is cultivated

It produces a *large* branch

And becomes a shelter for the birds of the sky."

A Kingdom of Children

Question: 21.1 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?"

Chreia: 21.2 He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs."

Contrary: 21.3 When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!'⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁵ This saying provides a justification for the scandalous behavior in *Thomas* 14.1-2. Chreia exercise employed: rationale.

⁷⁸⁶ This statement from the opposite connects *Thomas* 21.2 to the Parable of the Tenants in *Thomas* 65:

<i>Thomas</i> 65	<i>Thomas</i> 21.2-4
<p>A usurer owned a vineyard. He leased it to some tenants so that they would work it and he take the fruit from their hands. He sent his slave to collect the fruit of the vineyard. They seized his slave. They beat him, almost to the point of death. The slave went back to his master and told him (about what had happened). His master said: 'Perhaps he (the slave) did not know them (the tenants).' He sent another slave. The tenants beat that one as well. Then the master sent his son. He said: 'Perhaps they will be shamed before my son.' The tenants, since they knew he was the heir to the vineyard, seized him and killed him.</p>	<p>He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs."</p> <p>When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!'</p>

It 'finishes' the thought in *Thomas* 21.2 by making it a setting for a showdown.

- Example: 21.5 *That is why I say*: “If the householder knows that a thief is coming, he will keep watch before he comes. He will not let him break into his house, his estate-kingdom, to steal his possessions.”⁷⁸⁷
- Judgment: 21.6 Gird up your loins in a great power so that the thieves do not find a way to get to you. Because the necessities which you guard, they will find <them>.⁷⁸⁸
- Authority: 21.7 *Let* there be a person of understanding among you. When the grain ripened he came quickly with his sickle and reaped it.⁷⁸⁹
- Conclusion: 21.11 Whoever has ears, hear!

22.1 Jesus saw little children being nursed. He said to his disciples: “These little children are like those who enter the kingdom.”

Love of Neighbor

- Chreia: 25. Jesus said: “**Love your brother like your soul. Guard him like the pupil of your eye (ΒΑΛ).**”
- Rationale: 26. Jesus said: “**You see the sliver in your brother’s eye (ΒΑΛ), but you fail to see the plank that is in your own eye (ΒΑΛ). When you remove the plank from your own eye (ΒΑΛ) then you will be able to see (ΝΑΥ) clearly enough to remove the sliver from your brother’s eye (ΒΑΛ).**”
- Contrary: 31. Jesus said: “**No prophet is accepted in his own village. No physician heals those who know him.**”

Overcoming the City

- Chreia: 32. Jesus said: “**They are building a city upon an elevated mountain and fortifying it! It cannot fall – but it also cannot be hidden.**”

⁷⁸⁷ This example shows what the ‘children in the field’ should do: they are to guard their commandeered field as a householder guards against thieves.

⁷⁸⁸ This statement of judgment confirms the identification of the returning landowners with the thieves in *Thomas* 21.5.

⁷⁸⁹ *Thomas* 21.10 represents one of the few quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Joel 3:13 reads: “Put the sickle in, for the harvest is ready.” The minor redactor adds, however, one key word: ΚΕΠΗ, ‘hurry.’

Rationale: 33.1 Jesus said: **"What you hear in your ear declare with the other ear from your rooftops."**

Rationale: 33.2 *For* no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does one put it in a hidden place. Rather, that one puts it on a lamp stand so that everyone who enters and leaves will see its light.⁷⁹⁰

Contrary: 34. Jesus said: **"If a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a pit."**

Example: 35. Jesus said: **"It is not possible for someone to enter the house of a powerful man and take it by force without binding his hands. Then he will loot his house."**

Conclusion: 36. Jesus said, **"Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, [about your food, about what you're going to eat, or about your clothing--] what you are going to wear."**

Rationale: 36.2 [You are far] better than the lilies, which do not card nor [spin].

Contrary: 36.3 As for you when you have no clothes, what [will you put] on? Who might add to your status?

Conclusion: 36.5 *That* one will give your clothes.⁷⁹¹

Hinderances Before the Kingdom

Chreia: 39.1 Jesus said: **"The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge and hidden them. They do not enter nor do they permit those who desire to enter to enter."**

⁷⁹⁰ Chreia expressed with an example.

⁷⁹¹ B. Mack orders a similar rhetorical sequence of sayings in Q as follows:

"Thesis: One should not worry about life (food) or body (clothing).

Reason: Life is more than food and the body is more than clothing.

Analogy: Ravens do not work for food; God provides for them. You are worth more than birds.

Example: No one can add a day to life by worrying.

Analogy: Lilies do not work, yet are clothed.

Example: Solomon in all his splendor was not as magnificent as the lilies.

Analogy: Notice the grass. If God puts beautiful clothes on grass, won't he put clothes on you?

Conclusion: One should not worry about food or drink.

Example: All the nations worry about such things.

Exhortation: Instead, make sure of God's rule over you, and all these things will be yours as well."

(B.L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, 122).

- Contrary: 39.2 *As for you*, be as cunning as snakes and as innocent as doves.⁷⁹²
- Contrary: 40. Jesus said: **"A grapevine has been planted outside the Father. Since it is not supported, it will be pulled up from the roots and will be destroyed."**
- Analogy: 41. Jesus said: **"Whoever has something in his hand, more will be given. And whoever has nothing, even the little that person has will be taken away from that person."**
- Judgment: 42. Jesus said: **"Be passers-by."**
- Conclusion: 45.1 Jesus said: **"Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs picked from thistles, for they do not bear fruit."**
- Example: 45.2 A good person brings forth good from his storehouse, a bad person brings forth evil from his corrupt storehouse (which is in his heart) and he speaks evil. For out of abundance (of heart) he produces evil.⁷⁹³

John the Baptist and the Jesus Movement

- Chreia: 46.1 Jesus said: **"From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women, no one is honored more than John the Baptist, (so that) his eyes need not be averted."**
- Contrary: 46.2 *Yet, I have also said*: "Whoever among you becomes little will know the kingdom and will be honored more than John."⁷⁹⁴
- Contrary: 47.1 Jesus said: **"It is *impossible* for a person to mount two horses and to draw two bows."**
- Example: 47.2 *And* it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters, for he would honor the one and insult the other.
- Example: 47.3 No one wants to drink aged wine and immediately wants to drink new wine.
- Example: 47.4 *And* new wine is not poured into old wineskins, because they would burst. Nor is old wine poured into new wine skins, because it would spoil.

⁷⁹² This saying also serves as an exhortation.

⁷⁹³ Chreia expressed as an example.

⁷⁹⁴ That Jesus quotes himself here indicates that a later elaborative hand is at work. This saying suggests that some early Jesus followers were uncomfortable with him having a 'teacher' who was considered the most honored person. The saying appeals to the child material in *Thomas* 21.2 and *Thomas* 22.1.

Example: 47.5 An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear would result.

Conclusion: 48. Jesus said: **"If two make peace with each other in the same house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move away!' and it will move."**

A Kingdom of the Poor

Chreia: 54. Jesus said: **"Blessed are the poor, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."**

Contrary: 55.1 Jesus said: **"Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot be a disciple of mine."**

Same: 55.2 *And* whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and carry his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.⁷⁹⁵

Analogy: 57. Jesus said:
**The kingdom of the Father compares to a man who had good seed
His enemy came in the night
He sowed a weed amidst the good seed
The man did not permit them to pull up the weed
He said to them: 'When you go to pull up the weed you may also pull up
the good seed
On the day of the harvest the weeds will be visible
(Then) they pull them up and burn them.'**

Conclusion: 62.2: Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

Analogy: 63.1 Jesus said:
**There was a rich man who had an abundance of money
He said: 'I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, and
plant
And fill my storehouse
So that I lack nothing'
Such were his intentions, but that very night he died!**

Conclusion: 63.2 Whoever has ears, hear!

Analogy: 64.1 Jesus said:
**A man had guests.
When he had prepared the dinner, he sent his slave to invite the guests
He came to the first person**

⁷⁹⁵ This saying may well have been part of the initial chreia collection.

He said: 'My master invites you'
 He responded: 'I have money for some merchants who are coming to me this evening and I must place my orders. I cannot attend the dinner.'
 He went to another person
 He said: 'My master invites you'
 He responded: 'I just bought a house and am required for the day. I cannot attend.'
 He went to another person
 He said: 'My master invites you'
 He responded: 'My friend is getting married, and I am in charge of preparing the meal. I cannot attend the dinner.'
 He went to another person
 He said: 'My master invites you'
 He responded: 'I have purchased a field and am going to collect the rent. I cannot come. Please excuse me.'
 The slave left.
 He said to his master: 'The people you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.'
 The master said to his slave: 'Go outside on the streets. Whoever you find, bring them in so that they may dine.'

Conclusion: 64.2 Usurers and merchants will not enter the places of my Father.

Analogy: 65.1 Jesus said:
 A usurer owned a vineyard.
 He leased it to some tenants so that they would work it and he take the fruit from their hands.
 He sent his slave to collect the fruit of the vineyard.
 They seized his slave. They beat him, almost to the point of death.
 The slave went back to his master and told him (about what had happened).
 His master said: 'Perhaps he (the slave) did not know them (the tenants).'

He sent another slave.
 The tenants beat that one as well.
 Then the master sent his son.

He said: 'Perhaps they will be shamed before my son.'
 The tenants, since they knew he was the heir to the vineyard, seized him and killed him.

Conclusion: 65.2 Whoever has ears, hear!

Authority: 66. Jesus said: "Show me the stone that the builders rejected – *that* one is the cornerstone."

Conclusion: 68.1 Jesus said: **"Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted."**

Rationale: 68.2 *For* they will find no place where they persecuted you within.

Conclusion: 69.1 Jesus said: **"Blessed are those who have been persecuted within their hearts. They are the ones who have truly known the Father."**

Same: 69.2 Blessed are those who are hungry, for they are motivated to alleviate the belly of the one who desires.⁷⁹⁶

The Problem of Land Ownership

Responsive Chreia: 72. A man said to Jesus: **"Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me."**

He said to him: "Oh sir, who has made me a divider?"

He turned to his disciples and said: "I am not a divider am I?"

Rationale: 73. Jesus said: **"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord that he might send forth laborers to the harvest."**

Contrary: 74. He said: "Lord there are many around the well, but there is nothing in it."⁷⁹⁷

Analogy: 76.1 Jesus said:

The realm of the Father is compared to a merchant who had some merchandise

He found a pearl

That merchant was wise

He sold the merchandise

Then he purchased the pearl for *himself alone*.

Exhortation: 76.2 *You also*, seek after his treasure which does not perish, but endures – where neither moth approaches to eat it nor worm destroys.

Conclusion: 78. Jesus said: **"Why have you come out to the field? To see a reed shaken by the wind and to see someone dressed in soft clothes [like your kings] and powerful men? They are dressed in soft clothes, but they don't know the truth."**

⁷⁹⁶ This saying may well have been part of the initial chreia collection.

⁷⁹⁷ Chreia expressed as a wish.

Following the Word of God, Following the Word of Jesus

- Praise: 79.1 A woman in the crowd said to him: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you."
- Chreia: He said to her: "Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it."
- Contrary: 86. Jesus said: "[The foxes have] their dens and the birds have their nests, but the son of man has no place to lay down his head and rest(ṀTON)."
- Analogy: 89. Jesus said: "Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not understand that the one who created the inside is also the one that created the outside?"
- Conclusion 90.1 Jesus said: "Come to me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is gentle. <90.2 And you will find [rest] (ṀTON) for yourselves.">>

Seek and Find

- Chreia: 92.1 Jesus said: "Seek and you will find."
- Judgment: 93. Jesus said: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, for they might toss them to the dung pile. Do not toss pearls to pigs, for they might [trample them]."
- Confirmation: 94. Jesus said: "Whoever seeks will find. [Whoever knocks] they will open to that one."

Against Money Lending and Usury

- Chreia: 95. Jesus said: "If you have money, do not lend it at interest. Rather, lend it to someone who wont pay you back."
- Analogy: 96. Jesus said:
The kingdom of the Father is compared to a woman (C2IME)
She took a little yeast and hid it in dough
She made the loaves into leavened bread!
- Conclusion: 96.2 Whoever has ears, hear!
- Contrary: 97. Jesus said:
The kingdom of the Father is compared to a woman (C2IME) carrying a [jar] filled with meal.
While she was walking on the road a ways out, the handle of the jar broke.

The meal emptied out along the road, but she did not realize it or recognize a problem.

Conclusion: 98. Jesus said:
**The kingdom of the Father is compared to someone who wanted to kill a powerful man.
He drew his sword in his house
He stabbed the wall in order to see whether his hand might (have the stomach to) hold steady
Then he slew the powerful man.**

The Family of God

Question: 99. The disciples said to him: **"Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."**

Chreia: He said to them: **"Those who do the will of my Father, they are my brothers and my mother. They are (truly) the ones who enter the kingdom of my Father."**

Rationale: 100.1 They showed Jesus a coin and said to him: **"Caesar's people demand taxes from us." He said to them: "Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, (but) give God what is God's."**

Same: 100.2 *And* give me what is mine.⁷⁹⁸

Contrary: 101.1 Jesus said: **"Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother in the same way I do, cannot be a [disciple] of mine."**

Contrary: 101.2 *And* whoever does not love his father and his mother in the same way I do, cannot be a disciple of mine.

Analogy: 103. Jesus said: **"Blessed is the one who knows where the thieves are going to enter, so that [he] might arise and assemble his estate-(kingdom), and prepare himself."**

Conclusion: 104. They said to Jesus: **"Come, today let us pray and fast." Jesus said: "What sin have I committed, or where have I been defeated?"**

Finding the Kingdom

Chreia: 107. Jesus said:

⁷⁹⁸ Chreia expressed in the form of a comment.

The kingdom compares to a shepherd who had a hundred sheep
 One of them, the *largest*, went astray
 He left the (other) ninety-nine
 He sought after that one until he found it
 After such an effort, he said to the sheep:
 'I love you *more* than the (other) ninety-nine.'

Confirmation: 109.1 Jesus said:

The kingdom compares to a man who had in his field a hidden treasure,
 but he was unaware of it.
 And [after] his death, he left it to his son
 The son was also unaware (of the treasure)
 He took the field and sold [it]
 The one who bought the field went plowing and found the treasure.

Conclusion: 109.2 He began to lend money at interest to those he loved.⁷⁹⁹

Conclusion: 113.1 His disciples said to Jesus: "When will the kingdom come?"
 113.2 "It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying,
 'Here it is!' or 'Look! There it is.'
 113.3 Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but
 people don't see it."

The expanded chreia collection material exhibits a proclivity to expand the meanings of sayings. This was accomplished in both subtle ways (39.2 "*As for you*, be as cunning as snakes and as innocent as doves") and direct ways (46.2 *Yet, I have also said*: "Whoever among you becomes little will know the kingdom and will be honored more than John"). There is also a decision to make it clearer that the wealthy were not the possessors of the Kingdom -- this was accomplished in the following elaborations: 64.2 "Usurers and merchants will not enter the places of my Father," 69.2 "Blessed are those who are hungry, for they are motivated to alleviate the belly of the one who desires," 76.2 "*You also*, seek after his treasure which does not perish, but endures -- where neither moth approaches to eat it nor worm destroys," and 109.2 "He began to lend money at interest to those he loved." Beyond the individual

⁷⁹⁹ Chreia expressed in the form of a comment.

elaborations, the aphoristic clusters in *Thomas* 14, 21, and 36 exhibit the beginnings of a sustained rhetorical elaboration and sequence. The others expand the meanings of particular sayings, but in *Thomas* 14, 21, and 36 we see the construction of an argument. Whether these elaborations happened within a particular redactional phrase or not, the *structure* revealed in the thematic and elaborative shifts above is, I think, descriptive of a real *shift* within the text (no matter when it occurred). The *Gospel of Thomas* was never stable: it was intended to produce new meaning and to preserve a record of these shifts. Indeed, *Thomas* acts as a textual record of the hermeneutical shift within the constituencies that used the initial chreia collection.

The *Thomas* tradition, however, did more than merely make room for expansions of meaning and elaborations, it also *admitted new sayings material*. Some of the examples above, such as the lamp and bushel in *Thomas* 33.3, probably existed independently before their integration into the initial chreia collections -- this is evinced by the same saying's existence in other Gospels in different contexts. This certainly happens in what I have termed the 'judgment redaction.' In this minor stratum I cannot help but detect a decisive thematic shift: from sapiential concern to an interest in destruction, judgment, retroactive 'I-speech,' and

secrecy.⁸⁰⁰ What follows below is a demonstration of this ‘judgment’ reorientation of certain parts of the earlier chreia collection. Again, the justifications, when necessary, are provided in footnotes. I have also inserted certain Coptic vocabulary words that I believe demonstrate a coherence within the judgment redaction. The judgment material is indented to the right and in blue font:

9. Jesus said: **Look, a Sower went out with a handful and cast (NOYXE) (them)**
 Some fell on the road
 The birds came and gathered them
 Others fell on the rock
 (They) did not take root in the soil or produce ears (up
 to the sky)
 And others fell amongst thorns
 They choked the seed and were eaten by worms
 And some fell upon good soil
 It produced fruit (up to the heavens)
 Sixty per measure
 One hundred and twenty per measure!

⁸⁰⁰ 10. Jesus said: “I have cast (NOYXE) fire (KΩ2T) upon the world. And behold! I watch over it until it burns (XEPO).”

11.1 Jesus said: “This heaven (ΠΕ) will pass away and the one above it will pass away.”

16.1 Jesus said: “Perhaps people think that it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world (KOCMOC). But they do not know that is rebellion that I have come to cast upon the earth (KΔ2): fire (KΩ2T), sword, war!”

16.2 *For* there will be five within a household: three against two, and two against three -- father against son, and son against father.

44.1 Jesus said: “Whoever blasphemes against the father will be forgiven. And whoever blasphemes against the son will be forgiven.”

44.2 *But* whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, neither on earth (KΔ2) or heaven (ΠΕ).

61.1 Jesus said: “Two will recline on a couch – one will die, another other will live!”

62.1 Jesus said: “I tell my mysteries to those who are worthy of my mysteries.”

71. Jesus said: “I will destroy this house and no one will be able to rebuild it.”

79.2 *For* there will be days when you will say: ‘Blessed is the womb that has not conceived, and the breasts which have not given milk.’

82. Jesus said: “Whoever is near me is near the fire (KΩ2T), and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom.”

91.2 He said to them: “You read the face of the sky (ΠΕ) and the earth (KΔ2), but you do not know the one who is before you, nor do you know how to read this moment.”

111.1 Jesus said: “The heavens and earth will be rolled up (right) before you.”

- Rationale: 10. Jesus said: "I have cast (ΝΟΥΧΕ) fire (ΚΩ2Τ) upon the world. And behold! I watch over it until it burns (ΧΕΡΟ)." ⁸⁰¹
- Conclusion: 11.1 Jesus said: "This heaven (ΠΕ) will pass away and the one above it will pass away." ⁸⁰²
- Question: 12.1 The disciples said to Jesus: "We know that you will leave us. Who will become our leader?"
- Chreia: 12.2 Jesus said to them: "The place where you came from, you will go up to James the Righteous, for whom heaven (ΠΕ) and earth (ΚΑ2) have come into being."

<<6.1 His disciples asked him: "Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?">>

14.1 Jesus said to them: "If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits."

14.2 And whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.

14.3 *For*, what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which issues from your mouth will pollute you.

16.1 Jesus said: "Perhaps people think that it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world (ΚΟCΜΟC). But they do not know that is rebellion that I have come to cast upon the earth (ΚΑ2): fire (ΚΩ2Τ), sword, war!"

⁸⁰¹ *Thomas* 10 marks the first move by the judgment redactor. This saying represents an apocalyptic reorientation of the Parable of the Sower in *Thomas* 9. With this redaction the parable is allegorized into an apocalyptic story. The 'seed' now becomes the 'fire' which Jesus came to cast upon the world. This interpretation of the parable goes *against* the core, rather than with the core. This saying also exhibits the vocabulary shared by much of the judgment redaction: fire (ΚΩ2Τ), burning (ΧΕΡΟ), heaven (ΠΕ), earth (ΚΑ2). The insertion of *Thomas* 10 by the apocalyptic redactor was *according to theme* (i.e. the apocalyptic) and *word* (ΝΟΥΧΕ, cast).

⁸⁰² The judgment redactor has inserted this saying *according to theme*, which it shares with *Thomas* 10. Both *Thomas* 10 and 11 share a concern for apocalyptic reinterpretation. *Thomas* 11 also shares the vocabulary 'heaven' (ΠΕ) which plays prominently in the judgment redaction.

16.2 *For* there will be five within a household: three against two, and two against three -- father against son, and son against father.⁸⁰³

39.1 Jesus said: **"The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge and hidden them. They do not enter nor do they permit those who desire to enter to enter."**

39.2 *As for you*, be as cunning as snakes and as innocent as doves.

40. Jesus said: **"A grapevine has been planted outside the Father. Since it is not supported, it will be pulled up from the roots and will be destroyed."**

41. Jesus said: **"Whoever has something in his hand, more will be given. And whoever has nothing, even the little that person has will be taken away from that person."**

42. Jesus said: **"Be passers-by."**

44.1 Jesus said: "Whoever blasphemes against the father will be forgiven. And whoever blasphemes against the son will be forgiven."

44.2 *But* whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, neither on earth (ΚΑ2) or heaven (ΠΕ).⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰³ *Thomas* 16 and 17 in the minor redaction closes a step-parallel structure that followed the Parable of Sower in *Thomas* 9. The structure runs as follows:

10. Jesus said: "I have cast (ΝΟΥΧΕ) fire (ΚΩ2Τ) upon the world (ΚΟСМОС). And behold! I watch over it until it burns (ΧΕΡΟ)."²¹

11.1 Jesus said: "This heaven (ΠΕ) will pass away and the one above it will pass away."²²

12.1 The disciples said to Jesus: "We know that you will leave us. Who will become our leader?"

12.2 Jesus said to them: "The place where you came from, you will go up to James the Righteous, for whom heaven (ΠΕ) and earth (ΚΑ2) have come into being."

16.1 Jesus said: "Perhaps people think that it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world (ΚΟСМОС). But they do not know that is rebellion that I have come to cast upon the earth (ΚΑ2): fire (ΚΩ2Τ), sword, war!"

16.2 *For* there will be five within a household: three against two, and two against three -- father against son, and son against father.

⁸⁰⁴ These two sayings in *Thomas* 44.1 and 44.2 capture the reactionary and negative tenor of the judgment redaction (i.e. 'hate,' 'blasphemy,' and 'un-forgiveness'). The judgment redactor, it appears, has interpreted the short aphorism in 42 -- "Be passers-by" -- as a saying of judgment.

45.1 Jesus said: “Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs picked from thistles, for they do not bear fruit.”

57. Jesus said:

The kingdom of the Father compares to a man who had good seed
His enemy came in the night
He sowed a weed amidst the good seed
The man did not permit them to pull up the weed
He said to them: ‘When you go to pull up the weed you may also pull up
the good seed
On the day of the harvest the weeds will be visible
(Then) they pull them up and burn them.’

61.1 Jesus said: “Two will recline on a couch – one will die,
another other will live!”⁸⁰⁵

62.1 Jesus said: “I tell my mysteries to those who are worthy of
my mysteries.”⁸⁰⁶

62.2: Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

69.2 Blessed are those who are hungry, for they are motivated to alleviate the belly of the one
who desires.

71. Jesus said: “I will destroy this house and no one will be able
to rebuild it.”⁸⁰⁷

Praise: 79.1 A woman in the crowd said to him: “Blessed is the womb that bore you
and the breasts that nursed you.”

⁸⁰⁵ In the judgment redaction this saying was used to interpret the Parable of the Weeds in 57 as an allegory of the coming judgment.

⁸⁰⁶ Because *Thomas* 62.1 is used as means to allegorize the parables in the synoptic tradition (Mk 4:11, Mt 13:11, and Lk 8:10) and makes us of ‘I speech’ I have elected to attribute this saying to the judgment redactor. This attribution would make sense within the context set by the Parable of the Weeds and *Thomas* 61.2: here the judgment redactor rationalizes the scandalous statement in *Thomas* 61.2 and the preceding parable by declaring that Jesus only tells his mysteries (i.e. interpretations) to those whom he considers worthy. The judgment redactor also uses this saying to hermeneutically frame the next saying from expanded chreia collection: “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” Within the context of *Thomas* 62.1, 62.2 becomes a synthetic parallel statement. In this manner *Thomas* 62.2 becomes an example of Jesus telling his mysteries to whomever he chooses.

⁸⁰⁷ The judgment redactor inserted this saying as an elaboration *according to theme* on 69.2. The hungry here are used as an introduction to the impending destruction of the ‘house’ or, perhaps, ‘Temple.’

Chreia: **He said to her: “Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it.”**

Contrary: 79.2 *For* there will be days when you will say: ‘Blessed is the womb that has not conceived, and the breasts which have not given milk.’

Conclusion: 82. Jesus said: “Whoever is near me is near the fire (ΚΩ2Τ), and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom.”⁸⁰⁸

Chreia: 92.1 Jesus said: **“Seek and you will find.”**

Rationale: 91.2 He said to them: “You read the face of the sky (ΠΕ) and the earth (ΚΑ2), but you do not know the one who is before you, nor do you know how to read this moment.”⁸⁰⁹

Judgment: 111.1 Jesus said: “The heavens (ΠΕ) and earth (ΚΑ2) will be rolled up (right) before you.”⁸¹⁰

113.1 His disciples said to Jesus: **“When will the kingdom come?”**

113.2 **“It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘Look! There it is.’**

113.3 **Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but people don’t see it.”**

The judgment redaction represents a drastic shift from the initial chreia collection core. In the initial and expanded chreia collection the Kingdom was already present, but needed to be recognized. In the judgment redaction the Kingdom is *coming* -- and it is coming as an occasion for judgment, hence all of the vocabulary related to destructions, heaven, earth,

⁸⁰⁸ In the judgment redaction this saying follows *Thomas* 79.2’s oracle of judgment. In this sense, whoever is close to Jesus is close to the impending doom, but this doom -- in the judgment redaction -- inaugurates the kingdom of God. Therefore, whoever is far from Jesus, is “far from the kingdom” that follows the fire. Cf. *Thomas* 10 and 11.

⁸⁰⁹ The judgment redactor has inserted this saying according to theme in an effort to direct the preceding aphorism -- Seek and you will find -- toward an apocalyptic interpretation. With the judgment redactor’s reinterpretation of 92.1, the reader is directed to ‘seek and find’ (that is, recognize) the ‘moment’ of judgment.

⁸¹⁰ The judgment redactor inserted this saying as a *hermeneutical frame* for *Thomas* 113. This saying shifts the complex in *Thomas* 113 toward an apocalyptic expectation of the Kingdom, which is in direct contrast with the initial intentions of *Thomas* 113.

blasphemy, fire, sword, and war. When these sayings are collected together they reveal what appears to be a coherent stratum. However, within the *Thomas* tradition they *depend* on previous material and strive to reinterpret an earlier meaning. It should be noted, in contrast to A. DeConick's theory⁸¹¹, that this judgment material is the least attested material in *Thomas*. Also, because my reconstruction above shows the judgment material to be dependent on earlier rhetorical progressions, I believe it is quite certain that this material should not be used as the window through which the formative stratum should be recovered.

The Major Redaction

With the initial chreia core, the expanded chreia collection, and the judgement redaction outlined both literarily and rhetorically, we can turn to the primary task of the chapter, and that is the material left over. It is precisely what is 'left over' from the previous three sections that I term the major redaction. The previous three sections have, I believe, each exhibited coherent strata (as is demonstrated in the outline above); yet, the question before us now is whether or not the major redaction also evinces a coherent thematic matrix? I am convinced that it does. The primary context for the major redactional material is the Garden of Eden story in Genesis 1-3. The secondary context is the relationship between Jesus, his sayings, and his chosen apostle, Thomas (something that is further elaborated in the *Book of Thomas the Contender* and the *Acts of Thomas*). Because it is not the task of this chapter to demonstrate the thematic coherence of this stratum (as this will be done in chapter four), but to make the case that when this major redactional material is removed the other strata remain coherent, I will merely list these major redactional sayings. In chapter four I will offer a

⁸¹¹ See chapter two.

detailed analysis of their thematic coherence, relating especially to the Garden of Eden story. Before listing these sayings, however, I think it is important to list a number of Coptic vocabulary words that are shared throughout the major redaction, they are as follows:

ΜΟΥ	-- death
ϸΩ	-- drink
†2Ε, ΤΔ2Ε	-- drunk
ΤΗΡῘ	-- (the) all
ΩΝ2, ΟΝ2	-- life, living
ϸΟΥΩΝ	-- know, knowledge
ΩΔΧΕ	-- saying, sayings
ΚΟϸΜΟϸ	-- world
ΜῚΤ 2ΗΚΕ	-- poverty
ΔΡΧΗ	-- beginning
ΚΟϸΜΟϸ	-- world
Ι ΚΩΝ	-- image, icon
ΔΝΔΥΠΔϸΙϸ	-- repose
ΩΗΡΕ ΩΗΜ	-- little child
Ḳ ΚΟΥΕΙ	-- little ones
ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ	-- one alone
ΜΟΝΟΧΟϸ	-- an alone one
ϸΝΔΥ ΟΥΔ	-- two one
ϸΟΟΥΤ	-- male
ΟΥΟΜ	-- eat
ΠΤΩΜΔ	-- corpse
ϸΔΡΖ	-- flesh
ϸΩΜΔ	-- body
ΩΠΗΡΕ	-- wonder, awe

What follows is a complete list of the material that I consider to be the major redaction of the *Gospel of Thomas*. While I organize these sayings thematically, I acknowledge that these categories are somewhat artificial. These categories only gesture towards what is detailed in chapter three. However, lest I appear arbitrary in my attribution of this material to the major redaction, I thought it wise to organize these sayings thematically. Again, each of these categories are explored in detail in chapter three. After listing these sayings I will show how this material operates within the rest of the *Gospel of Thomas* tradition.

Jesus Accessed Through his Sayings, and his Apostle, Thomas

P. These are the veiled sayings (ϠΛΧΕ) which the living Jesus spoke and Judas Didymos Thomas wrote them down.

1. And he said: "Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings (ϠΛΧΕ) will not taste death (ΜΟΥ)."

111.2 And the one who lives (ΟΝ2) from the Living (ΟΝ2) One will not see death (ΜΟΥ).

91.1 They said to him: "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you."

91.2 "But, that which you asked me about in those days I did not tell you, but I now desire to tell you, but you no longer seek (to know)."

38. Jesus said: "Many times you longed to hear the sayings that I am telling you, and you have no other to hear them from. The days will come when you seek after me, but you will not find me."

17. Jesus said: "I will give you -- what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, and what has never encountered the human mind."

108. Jesus said: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person."

13.1 Jesus said to his disciples: "Compare and tell me whom I resemble."

Simon Peter said to him: "You are like a righteous angel."

Matthew said to him: "You are like a wise philosopher."

Thomas said to him: "Teacher, my mouth will not permit me to say whom you resemble."

Jesus said: "I am not your teacher – you are drunk (†2Ε). Because you drank from the bubbling spring that I have measured out."

13.2 And he took him and departed. He told him three sayings (ϠΛΧΕ).

When Thomas came back to his companions they asked him: "What did Jesus say to you?"

Thomas said to them: "If I told you the sayings (ϠΛΧΕ) he told me, you would take up stones and cast them at me. And fire would burst out of those stones and burn you."

43.1 His disciples said to him: "Who are you to say these things to us?"

43.2 "You do not realize who I am from what I say to you? Rather, you have become like the Judeans: they love the tree, but hate its fruit – and love its fruit, but hate the tree."

28. Jesus said: "I took my stand in the midst of the world (ΚΟCΜΟC), and I was manifested to them in flesh (CΑΡΞ). I found all of them drunk (ΤΑ2Ε) and none of them thirsting. And my soul throbbed for the sons of men for they are blind in their hearts and do not see (ΝΑΥ). For blind they came into the world empty and seek also to leave the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) empty. But right now they are merely drunk (ΤΟ2Ε). When they sober up, then they will turn."

Living on the Seventh Day of Creation

4.1 Jesus said: "The person old in days will not hesitate to ask a small child of *seven days* about the place of life (ΩΝ2), and he will live (ΩΝ2)."

27. Jesus said: "If you do not fast to the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) you will not find the kingdom. If you do not make the *Sabbath* a (true) *Sabbath* (i.e. the Seventh Day), you will not see (ΝΔΥ) the Father."

Being a Unified, Solitary like the First Image of God that was Created Male and Female

49. Jesus said: "Blessed are the solitaires (ΜΟΝΟΧΟC) and chosen (ones), for you will find the kingdom, for are from it and will return there."

75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires (ΜΟΝΟΧΟC) are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber."

4.3 And they will come to be one alone (ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ).

114.1 Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary leave us for women do not deserve (the) Life (ΩΝ2)."

114.2 Jesus said: "Look! I will lead her so that I might make her male, which will make her into a living (ΟΝ2) spirit resembling you males."

114.3 For any woman that makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.

106. Jesus said: "When you make the two one (CΝΔΥ ΟΥΔ), you will become children of (the) Man. And if you say: 'Mountain move away!' It will move."

30. Jesus said: "Where there are [three, they are] Godless, where there is one alone, I say I am with that one."

<<30. Jesus said: "Where there are three gods, they are Gods, where there are two (CΝΔΥ) or one (ΟΥΔ), I am with them.>>

Living again as a Naked Child in Eden

37.1 His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"

37.2 Jesus said: "When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take up your clothes and put them under your feet like little children, and tread on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living (ΟΝ2) One and you will not be afraid."

22.2 They said to him: "Will we enter the kingdom as little children?"

22.3 Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one (CΝΔΥ ΟΥΔ), and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when

you make the male and the female into a solitary one (ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ), so that the male is not male nor the female female. And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image (ΙΚΩΝ) in place of an image (ΙΚΩΝ), then you will enter [the kingdom].”

21.4 (But) they will strip naked in front of them in order to abandon it, so that the field is returned to them.

88. Jesus said: “The messengers and the prophets will come to you. They will give you what is yours and you will give them what you have. *You will say to yourselves:* ‘When will they come and take what is theirs?’”

Overcoming the ‘Garments of Skin’ Donned after the Fall

Chreia: 29.1 Jesus said: “If the flesh (CΑΡΞ) emerged from the spirit, it is a wonder (ΩΠΗΡΕ). But if the spirit emerged from the body (CΩΜΑ), that is a wonder (ΩΠΗΡΕ) of wonders (ΩΠΗΡΕ)”!

Contrary: 29.2 *Yet*, I wonder (ΩΠΗΡΕ) at how this great richness was placed in this poverty (ΜΝΤ ΖΗΚΕ).

3.3 When you come to know (COYΩN) yourselves then you will be known (COYΩN), and you will realize that you are the sons of the Living (ON2) Father.

3.4 *If, however*, you do not come to know yourselves then you dwell in poverty (ΜΝΤ ΖΗΚΕ) and you are the poverty (ΜΝΤ ΖΗΚΕ).

87. Jesus said: “Damn the body (CΩΜΑ) that depends on a body (CΩΜΑ); and damn to the soul that depends on these two.”

112. Jesus said: “Damn the flesh (CΑΡΞ) that depends on the soul, and damn the soul that depends on the flesh (CΑΡΞ).”

80. Jesus said: Whoever has known the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) has found the body (CΩΜΑ). And whoever has found the body (CΩΜΑ), the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) is no longer worthy of that person.

Chreia: 7.1 Jesus said: “Blessed is the lion which the person (PΩΜΕ) eats – and the lion becomes a person (PΩΜΕ).

Contrary: 7.2 And cursed is the person (PΩΜΕ) whom the lion eats – and the lion becomes a person (PΩΜΕ).”

53.1 His disciples said to him: “Is circumcision beneficial or not for us?” He said to them: “If it were beneficial their father would beget them circumcised from their mother.”

53.2 *Rather*, true circumcision in Spirit is entirely (ΤΗΡῒ) profitable.

Finding the Earlier Image of God

18.1 The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us, how will our end be?"

Jesus said: "Have you discovered the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ) that you ask about the end? For, in the place where the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ) is, there the end will be."

18.2 Blessed is the one who takes his stand in the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ), he will know the end, and he will not experience death (ΜΟΥ).

Chreia: 19.1 Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who came into being *from* the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ), *before* he came to be."

Rationale: 19.2 *If* you become my disciples and listen to my sayings, these stones will become your servants.

Conclusion: 19.3 *For* there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not experience death (ΜΟΥ).

21.6 *But* you, keep watch from the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ) of the world (ΚΟΣΜΟΣ); gird up your loins in a great power so that the thieves do not find a way to get to you.

70. Jesus said: "When you birth the one within you, that one will save you. If you do not have that one within you, that one will kill you."

83. Jesus said: "The images (ΙΚΩΝ) are manifested to humanity, and the light within them is hidden in the image (ΙΚΩΝ) of the Father's light. He will be made manifest but his image (ΙΚΩΝ) is hidden away in his light."

84. Jesus said: "In the days when you would look at your resemblance you rejoiced. When, however, you look upon the images (ΙΚΩΝ) that came into being upon your emergence, which neither die (ΜΟΥ) nor manifest themselves, how much you will have to bear!"

85. Jesus said: "Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth. But he was not worthy of you. For, if he had been worthy (of you) [he would] not [have tasted] death (ΜΟΥ)."

2.2 And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed (ΥΠΗΡΕ), and he will rule-as-a-king (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ) over (the) all (ΤΗΡΑ).

58. Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who is disturbed (by his discovery), he has found life (ΩΝΤ)."

50.1 Jesus said: "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?'

50.2 Say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image (ΙΚΩΝ).' If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living (ΟΝ2) Father.'

50.3 If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say, 'It is movement and repose (ΑΝΔΥΠΑCIC).'"

Only the Living Live

59. Jesus said: "Look after the Living (ΟΝ2) One while you are living (ΟΝ2), lest you die (ΜΟΥ) and (then) seek to see that one. You will not find the power to behold."

51.1 His disciples said to him: "When will the repose (ΑΝΔΥΠΑCIC) of the dead (ΜΟΥ) take place, and when will the new world (ΚΟCΜΟC) come?"

51.2 He said to them: "That which you look for has come, but you did not recognize it."

52.1 His disciples said to him: "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and all have spoken within you."

52.2 He said to them: "You have left out the Living One (ΟΝ2) in your presence, and you spoke (only) about those who are dead (ΜΟΥ)."

60. <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea.

He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb."

They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat (ΟΥΟΜ) it."

He said to them: "While it is living (ΟΝ2) he will not eat (ΟΥΟΜ) it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (ΠΤΩΜΑ) (and then he can eat it)."

They said to him: "There is no other way."

He said to them: "*You also*, seek after a place of repose (ΑΝΔΥΠΑCIC), lest you become corpses (ΠΤΩΜΑ) and get consumed."

90.2 *And* you will find repose (ΑΝΔΥΠΑCIC) for yourselves.

11.2 Those who are dead (ΜΟΟΥΤ) do not live and those who live will not die (ΜΟΥ). In the days you ate what was dead (ΜΟΥ) you were making it that which lives (ΟΝ2). When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do? On the day you were one (ΟΥΑ) you became two (CΝΑΥ). But when you become two (CΝΑΥ) what will you do?

Returning to the First Creation where Humanity only had God as Father -- rather than 'fleshly' parents

15. Jesus said: "When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your faces and worship him. *That one* is your Father."

105. Jesus said: "Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!"

101.3 *For* my mother [birthed my body], but my true [mother] gave me life (ΩN2).

Ruling as the First Adam was Intended to Rule

67. Jesus said: "Whoever knows the all (ΤΗΡῶ), if he (still) needs himself, he (still) needs (the) all (ΤΗΡῶ)."

77.1 Jesus said: "I am the light which is above them all (ΤΗΡῶ), I am the all (ΤΗΡῶ). (The) all (ΤΗΡῶ) has come forth from me, and (the) all (ΤΗΡῶ) has split open before me."

<<77.2 // 30.3 Lift the stone, you will find me there. Split the piece of wood, I am there.>>

2.2 And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed (ΩΠΗΡΕ), and he will rule-as-a-king (ΡΡΟ) over (the) all (ΤΗΡῶ).

61.2 Salome said: "Who are you (to say such things) while you recline upon my couch and eat from my table?"

Jesus said to her: "I derive from the One who is equal (to all). I was (merely) given (by you) that which is my Father's."

"I am your disciple."

61.3 *Because of this, I say:* "When a person becomes <equal> that person will be full of light."

24.1 His disciples said: "Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary that we seek after it." He said to them:

24.2 Whoever has ears to hear, hear!

24.3 There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire (ΤΗΡῶ) world (ΚΟCΜΟC). If that one does not shine, there is darkness.

81. Jesus said: "Whoever has grown rich should rule (ΡΡΟ). But whoever has power should renounce."

111.3 *Does not Jesus say:* 'Whoever has found oneself, the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) is not worthy of that person.'

110. Jesus said: "Whoever has found the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) and become rich should renounce the world (ΚΟCΜΟC)."

The Major Redaction in Operation

I. These are the veiled sayings (ϠΔΧΕ) which the living Jesus spoke and Judas Didymos Thomas wrote them down.⁸¹²

1. And he said: "Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings (ϠΔΧΕ) will not experience death (ΜΟΥ)." ⁸¹³

2.1 Jesus said: **"Let the one who seeks continue seeking until he finds."**

2.2 And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed (ϠΠΗΡΕ), and he will rule-as-a-king (ḲΡΟ) over (the) all (ΤΗΡḲ).⁸¹⁴

3.1 Jesus said: **"If those who lead you proclaim to you: 'The Kingdom is in heaven,'**

then the birds of heaven will enter before you.
If they proclaim to you: 'It is in the sea,'
then the fish will enter before you."

3.2. *Rather*, the kingdom is within you and outside of you.

⁸¹² The major redactor has hermeneutically framed the 'Gospel' with this prologue in order to direct the hermeneutical approach of the reader. The sayings are not necessarily 'hidden' but veiled because the reader is about to bring them into the open (5.2 "For, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed"). The authority of Thomas connects this text to the traditional Apostle of Syria and serves to connect the text to Jesus himself, who still 'lives' in his sayings. Rationale for insertion: hermeneutical frame.

⁸¹³ Following the prologue, this logion exhorts the reader to unveil the sayings recorded in the logia that follow. The major redactor has inserted the thematic concern about 'not tasting death' to frame the hermeneutic that should be applied by the reader. By inserting this hermeneutic at the beginning, the major redactor has significantly altered both the formative stratum and the minor redaction. Rationale for insertion: hermeneutical frame.

⁸¹⁴ A hermeneutical expansion on *Thomas* 2.1. The use of ϠΠΗΡΕ, ΤΗΡḲ, and ḲΡΟ suggests insertion by the major redactor. The major redactor inserted *Thomas* 2.2 in order to introduce the theme of 'Ruling as the First Adam was Intended to Rule.' Chreia exercise employed: *expansion*.

3.3 When you come to know (COYΩN) yourselves then you will be known (COYΩN), and you will realize that you are the sons of the Living (ON2) Father.

3.4 *If, however,* you do not come to know yourselves then you dwell in poverty (MNT 2HK€) and you are the poverty (MNT 2HK€).⁸¹⁵

4.1 Jesus said: "The person old in days will not hesitate to ask a small child of seven days about the place of life (ΩN2), and he will live (ΩN2)." ⁸¹⁶

4.2 *For* many who are first will be last.

4.3 *And* they will come to be one alone (OYΔ OYΩT). ⁸¹⁷

5.1 Jesus said: "***Recognize what is right in front of your face, and what is hidden will be revealed to you.***"

⁸¹⁵ The characteristic vocabulary (COYΩN, MNT 2HK€, ΩN2) suggests that the major redactor's hand is operative here. The major redactor in *Thomas* 3.3 and 3.4 offers two commentary phrases on 3.2. The 'within you' has been interpreted according to the theme of 'knowing the self and the world.' This major redactional theme equates the 'interior life' with 'knowledge of the self,' and 'poverty' with the world, body, flesh, and corpse. Thus, for the major redactor, the 'Kingdom being *within*' is expanded upon to suggest that this 'Kingdom within' is to be equated with self knowledge and life in poverty. This hermeneutical expansion has significantly altered the earlier form in *Thomas* 113.3 by reversing the emphasis on the Kingdom being spread out upon the earth to being *within* the self, just as the self is *within* the body, flesh, and world. Chreia exercise employed: expansion.

⁸¹⁶ A possible hermeneutical variation on *Thomas* 22.1: Jesus saw little children being nursed. He said to his disciples: "These little children are like those who enter the kingdom." The major redactor has inserted this saying as an expansion on the interiorized theme introduced in *Thomas* 3.2-3.4 and the seeking theme that commands *Thomas* 1-2.2. The redactor here introduces a theme that plays prominently in the major redaction: 'being as a child in the Garden of Eden.' In this manner the major redactor has equated the interior life (i.e. 'knowing the self') with the primordial state in the Garden of Eden. For the major redactor, childhood is closely associated with the interior life. This child, presumably, should be associated with the primordial image of God (i.e. child) that continues to exist on the Seventh Day -- that is, the Sabbath (cf. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained*, 6). This is where the 'Father' exists, and as such, the disciple too should return to this Edenic state. This Sabbath Day redactional theme is expressed clearly in *Thomas* 27.2: "If you do not make the Sabbath a (true) Sabbath, you will not see the Father." Chreia exercise employed: expansion.

⁸¹⁷ This expansion according to theme by the major redactor has altered the earlier potency of *Thomas* 4.2 -- which now reads as an aphorism interested in the primordial condition in the Garden of Eden. To emphasize this association the major redactor has added this commentary phrase in 4.3. It is uncertain what is being encouraged here precisely. This appears to be both an exhortation to the solitary life as a monk and an exhortation to return to the Garden of Eden as a 'solitary one,' which according to *Thomas* 22.3 is an androgynous primordial image of God. Within the context set by the major redactor in *Thomas* 4.1, the primordial image of God appears to be the operative theme. However, when this theme is incorporated into praxis it is acted out in the ascetic enterprise. *Thomas* 4.3's use of common major redaction vocabulary (OYΔ OYΩT) further suggests that this saying was inserted by the major redactor. Chreia exercise employed: comment.

5.2 *For*, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.

--[6.1 His disciples asked him: "Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?"]--⁸¹⁸

6.2 Do not tell lies and do not do what you hate.

6.3 *For* all things are revealed before the presence of heaven.

7. Jesus said: "Blessed is the lion which the person (PΩME) eats – and the lion becomes a person (PΩME). And cursed is the person (PΩME) whom the lion eats – and the lion becomes a person (PΩME)." ⁸¹⁹

8.1 And he said: "The person compares to a wise fisherman:

He cast his net into the sea

He drew it up from the sea full of little fish from below

And he found *one large* fish

The fisherman was wise

He cast the little fish into the sea

He chose the *large* fish without trouble."

8.2 Whoever has ears to hear, listen!

9. Jesus said: Look, a Sower went out with a handful and cast (them)

Some fell on the road

The birds came and gathered them

Others fell on the rock

(They) did not take root in the soil or produce ears (up to the sky)

And others fell amongst thorns

They choked the seed and were eaten by worms

⁸¹⁸ Because the answers to these questions exist in *Thomas* 14.1, it appears that *Thomas* 6.1 was once part of an earlier dialogue complex. This stitch in 6.1 makes more rhetorical sense in the context that 14.1 is found, which suggests that 6.1's extant position should be considered secondary. Because the major redactor inserted *Thomas* 13.2 as a means of interpreting *Thomas* 14.1 (i.e. the 'three sayings' in 13.2 and the three sayings in 14.1), it seems that 6.1's extant sequence was detached from 14 and reinserted between 5.2 and 6.2. The motivation for this insertion by the major redactor, given the aphorism in 6.3, is to expose false humility and relativize religious observance in favor of a simple adherence to the Golden Rule and a commitment to not lie. Thus 6.1 was resequenced by the major redactor as a framing hermeneutic for 6.2. The origins of 6.1 are with the minor redactor of the sapiential core, but resequenced by the major redactor.

⁸¹⁹ The major redactor in *Thomas* 7 introduces a prominent theme in the major redaction: 'the eating of dead things vs. eating *living* things.' Though the meaning of this saying is obscure, its sequencing rationale perhaps is not. It appears that the major redactor inserted this beatitude according to word. The verbal agreement between *Thomas* 7 and 8 seems to be the Coptic (or earlier Greek) word PΩME (human, person).

And some fell upon good soil
It produced fruit (up to the heavens)
Sixty per measure
One hundred and twenty per measure!

10. Jesus said: "I have cast (ΝΟΥΧΕ) fire (ΚΩ2Τ) upon the world. And behold! I watch over it until it burns (ΧΕΡΟ)."

11.1 Jesus said: "This heaven (ΠΕ) will pass away and the one above it will pass away."

11.2 Those who are dead (ΜΟΟΥΤ) do not live and those who live will not die (ΜΟΥ). In the days you ate what was dead (ΜΟΥ) you were making it that which lives (ΟΝ2). When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do? On the day you were one (ΟΥΔ) you became two (CΝΔΥ). But when you become two (CΝΔΥ) what will you do? ⁸²⁰

12.1 The disciples said to Jesus: "We know that you will leave us. Who will become our leader?"

12.2 Jesus said to them: "The place where you came from, you will go up to James the Righteous, for whom heaven (ΠΕ) and earth (ΚΔ2) have come into being."⁸²¹

⁸²⁰ The major redactor has inserted this hermeneutical expansion in an effort to soften the apocalyptic tenor of the clause in 11.1. The future passing-away of the heavens is replaced with a concern for the present moment. In 11.2 there is no future. Beyond the concern for the present moment, the major redactor has continued the theme of reinterpreting the Jesus tradition within the framing narrative of the Garden of Eden story. Here the disciples dwell in the light and like the primordial Adam exist beyond the distinction of male and female. This primordial Adam became 'Adam and Eve' (i.e. male and female), and thus became 'two.' But, the major redactor poses the question: 'What happens if they returned to their primordial androgynous state?' In the 'fallen' state humanity eats dead things and live in darkness. But when they reenter Eden and "stand at the beginning" (*Thomas* 19) they will no longer be in a world that is passing away. They would be, rather, in the world of light, androgynous like the first Adam (in Genesis 1), and eating 'living things' (i.e. Jesus' words, cf. *Thomas* 108). The use of vocabulary (ΜΟΥ, ΜΟΟΥΤ, ΟΝ2) characteristic of the major redaction further suggests that this saying derives from the major redactor.

⁸²¹ The major redactor has parodied this tradition by inserting the Thomas tradition that follows in 13. Jesus, in 12.2, does not instruct his disciples *what to do* but describes what had *already happened*. In this sense 12.2 is an anachronistic response to events that were contemporary with the major redactor. In the context supplied by *Thomas* 13 it is relatively clear that the major redactor disagrees with this development. I take this position because the disciples *never* speak correctly in the Thomas tradition. Why, all of a sudden, would this question move in a different direction? It does not. For the Thomasine community and the major redactor, Thomas is the example, not James. When read in isolation *Thomas* 12.2 appears to encourage the practice of adhering to Jamesian authority, but in the context of *Thomas* 13, the complex moves in the opposite direction. *Thomas* 12 follows 10 and 11 according to theme (i.e. coming peril) and according to word (heaven, earth in both 10 and 12.2).

13.1 Jesus said to his disciples: "Compare and tell me whom I resemble."

Simon Peter said to him: "You are like a righteous angel."

Matthew said to him: "You are like a wise philosopher."

Thomas said to him: "Teacher, my mouth will not permit me to say whom you resemble."

Jesus said: "I am not your teacher – you are drunk (†2€). Because you drank from the bubbling spring that I have measured out." ⁸²²

13.2 And he took him and departed. He told him three sayings (ϰΔΧΕ).

When Thomas came back to his companions they asked him: "What did Jesus say to you?"

Thomas said to them: "If I told you the sayings (ϰΔΧΕ) he told me, you would take up stones and cast them at me. And fire would burst out of those stones and burn you." ⁸²³

<<6.1 His disciples asked him: "Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?">>

14.1 Jesus said to them: "If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits."

14.2 And whatever land you enter and walk about its environs, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them.

⁸²² This dialogue complex has been inserted by the major redactor as a means of *refuting* and parodying the tradition in 12.1-2 that precedes it. If the major redactor meant *Thomas* 12.2 as an imperative rather than a description of what *had already happened* in early Christianity, one would expect Jesus to commend Thomas. In *Thomas* 13.1 it is the teachings of Jesus that are most important. When they are misunderstood some followers think that Jesus as the messenger is more important than the message; this is what is meant by Thomas' intoxication by Jesus' teachings. Thomas begins to think that Jesus is beyond his message, but Jesus reorients this trajectory by resisting his praise. This dialogue complex employs vocabulary (†2€) that is shared by other logia from the major redaction, which further suggests its derivation from the major redactor's hand. Chreia exercise employed: refutation.

⁸²³ *Thomas* 13.2 presents a narrative expansion of the tradition in 13.1. The major redactor has placed this dialogue piece before 14.1 to parallel the 'three sayings' in 13.2 with the three sayings in 14.1:

- 1.) If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves.
- 2.) And if you pray, you will be condemned.
- 3.) And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits.

Each of these three sayings in 14.1 are certainly scandalous by ancient Jewish standards, which is precisely why Thomas would've been stoned by his compatriots in 13.2. Thus the major redactor inserted this complex according to theme (i.e. scandalous sayings and behavior) and according to form (i.e. three sayings). (Cf. *Thomas* 6.1.)

14.3 *For*, what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which issues from your mouth will pollute you.

15. Jesus said: "When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your faces and worship him. *That one* is your Father." ⁸²⁴

16.1 Jesus said: "Perhaps people think that it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world (ΚΟΙΝΟΝ). But they do not know that is rebellion that I have come to cast upon the earth (ΚΑΙ): fire (ΚΑΙ), sword, war!"

16.2 *For* there will be five within a household: three against two, and two against three -- father against son, and son against father.

17. Jesus said: "I will give you -- what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, and what has never encountered the human mind."

18.1 The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us, how will our end be?" Jesus said: "Have you discovered the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ) that you ask about the end? For, in the place where the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ) is, there the end will be."

18.2 Blessed is the one who takes his stand in the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ)
He will know the end. And he will not experience death (ΜΟΤ).

19.1 Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who came into being *from* the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ), *before* he came to be."

19.2 *If* you become my disciples and listen to my sayings, these stones will become your servants.

⁸²⁴ In *Thomas* 105 we learn that "Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!" which echoes this saying in *Thomas* 15. As was discussed in chapter three, many Jewish and early Christian interpreters thought that Adam was not physically naked but existing without a physical body. In the context of some early Christian and Jewish reflections on the Eden story, physical birth was the result of the 'fall.' According to the major redactor, being born of a woman is defiling. Perhaps it is this shared concern for defilement that the major redactor inserted 15 after 14.3. Thus the major redactor inserted *Thomas* 15 according to theme. Chreia expressed: in a figurative manner.

19.3 *For* there are five trees in paradise, which remain unmoved
summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever
knows them will not experience death (MOY).⁸²⁵

20. The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us, what is the Kingdom of Heaven is
compared to?"

He said:

"It compares to a mustard seed *smaller* than all seeds

But when it falls on soil that is cultivated

It produces a *large* branch

And becomes a shelter for the birds of the sky."

21.1 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?"

21.2 He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs."

21.3 When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!'

⁸²⁵ The major redactor inserted *Thomas* 18.1-19.3 according to theme and according to form. The theme clearly reflects the major redactor's concern for 'life in Eden' and interest in redirecting the early Christian apocalyptic proclivity by directing the reader toward the beginning rather than the end. The insertion of the question in *Thomas* 18.1 makes sense when one reflects on what was expressed in 17. Because 17 claims to reveal all things it makes perfect sense for the major redactor to insert a question about that which no one has ever lived through: death. Additionally, the question form in 20 offers a formal parallelism with the question in 18.1. The use of vocabulary characteristic of the major redaction (ΔΡΧΗ, ΜΟΥ) further suggests that these logia were inserted by the major redactor. *Thomas* 19.3 expresses a chreia as example.

21.4 (But) they will strip naked in front of them in order to abandon it, so that the field is returned to them. ⁸²⁶

21.5 *That is why I say:* "If the householder knows that a thief is coming, he will keep watch before he comes. He will not let him break into his house, his estate-kingdom, to steal his possessions."

⁸²⁶ The major redactor is responding to the uncomfortable association of Jesus' disciples with the scandalous and violent tenants in the Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard. Consider the parallels between *Thomas* 21.2-4 and the Parable of the Tenants in *Thomas* 65:

<i>Thomas</i> 65	<i>Thomas</i> 21.2-4
<p>A usurer owned a vineyard. He leased it so some tenants so that they would work it and he take the fruit from their hands. He sent his slave to collect the fruit of the vineyard. They seized his slave. They beat him, almost to the point of death. The slave went back to his master and told him (about what had happened). His master said: 'Perhaps he (the slave) did not know them (the tenants).' He sent another slave. The tenants beat that one was well. Then the master sent his son. He said: 'Perhaps they will be shamed before my son.' The tenants, since they knew he was the heir to the vineyard, seized him and killed him.</p>	<p>He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that is not theirs." When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Give us back our field!' <(But) they will strip naked in front of them in order to abandon it, so that the field is returned to them.></p>

Thomas 21.4, as in 21.6, betrays the hermeneutical interests of the major redactor. It is relatively clear that the major redactor has interpreted the 'field' in the earlier version of 21.4 as the Garden of Eden. The evidence of this identification is presented in the paralleled logion in *Thomas* 37:

His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"

Jesus said: "When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take up your clothes and put them under your feet like little children, and tread on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living One and you will not be afraid."

Within the context of *Thomas* 37 it seems that the major redactor is associating the 'little children in the field' with the primordial Adam in the 'field' of Eden. If the disciples return to the first Adam they will be without 'clothes'; that is, they will not have the garment of flesh that was provided them in Genesis 3:21.

21.6 *But* you, keep watch from the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ) of the world (ΚΟΣΜΟΣ); gird up your loins in a great power so that the thieves do not find a way to get to you.⁸²⁷

21.7 Gird up your loins in a great power so that the thieves do not find a way to get to you. Because the necessities which you guard, they will find <them>.

21.8 *Let* there be a person of understanding among you. When the grain ripened he came quickly with his sickle and reaped it.

21.9 Whoever has ears, hear!

Example: 22.1 **Jesus saw little children being nursed. He said to his disciples: “These little children are like those who enter the kingdom.”**

22.2 They said to him: “Will we enter the kingdom as little children?”

22.3 Jesus said to them: “When you make the two one (CΝΑΥ ΟΥΔ), and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when you make the male and the female into a solitary one (ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ), so that the male is not male nor the female female. And when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a

⁸²⁷ The major redactor, contrary to the position of the minor redactor, has interpreted 21.5 spiritually. In this redactional move the thief tradition has been reoriented toward the inner-life of the reader; the disciple plays the householder guarding against the onslaught of the world. Moreover, the reader is to “keep watch from the beginning of the world” which is certainly reminiscent of the Edenic interests of the major redactor.

We have five forms of the thief tradition in the *Gospel of Thomas*:

- 1.) A formerly independent version: “If the householder knows that a thief is coming, he will keep watch before he comes. He will not let him break into his house, his estate-kingdom, to steal his possessions.” This tradition is linked with:
- 2.) *Thomas* 35: “It is not possible for someone to enter the house of a powerful man and take it by force without binding his hands. Then he will loot his house.”
- 3.) The tradition was then used to elaborate the parable in *Thomas* 21.2-3, (4) by the minor redactor: “*That is why I say*: ‘If the householder knows that a thief is coming, he will keep watch before he comes. He will not let him break into his house, his estate-kingdom, to steal his possessions.’”
- 4.) *Thomas* 103: “Blessed is the one who knows where the thieves are going to enter, so that [he] might arise and assemble his estate-(kingdom), and prepare himself.”
- 5.) Finally, the major redactor reverses this trend placing the tradition at the beginning of the world in 21.6: “But you, keep watch from the beginning (ΑΡΧΗ) of the world (ΚΟΣΜΟΣ); gird up your loins in a great power so that the thieves do not find a way to get to you.”

hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image (ΙΚΩΝ) in place of an image (ΙΚΩΝ), then you will enter [the kingdom].”⁸²⁸

23.1 Jesus said: “I will choose you, one (ΟΥΔ) from a thousand and two (CΝΔΥ) from ten thousand.”⁸²⁹

24.1 His disciples said: “Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary that we seek after it.” He said to them:⁸³⁰

24.2 Whoever has ears to hear, hear!

24.3 There is light within a person of light, and that one lights up the entire (ΤΗΡΕ) world (ΚΟCΜΟC). If that one does not shine, there is darkness.⁸³¹

Love of Neighbor

25. Jesus said: “Love your brother like your soul. Guard him like the pupil of your eye (ΒΔΛ).”

26. Jesus said: “You see the sliver in your brother’s eye (ΒΔΛ), but you fail to see the plank that is in your own eye (ΒΔΛ). When you remove the plank from your own eye (ΒΔΛ) then you will be able to see (ΝΔΥ) clearly enough to remove the sliver from your brother’s eye (ΒΔΛ).”

⁸²⁸ The major redactor answers the question shared with the Johannine community not by recommending baptism in water and spirit, but by returning to Eden. This complex evinces the hermeneutical interests of the major redactor as well as vocabulary (ΙΚΩΝ, ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ, CΝΔΥ ΟΥΔ) characteristic of the major redaction.

⁸²⁹ Given the shared vocabulary (CΝΔΥ, ΟΥΔ) with the major redaction and the preceding saying in 22.3, and considering that this saying has parallels in Mandaean sources, *Pistis Sophia*, and the heresiologists (Irenaeus, *Adversus H.*, I, 24, 6; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 24, 5) but not in the synoptic Gospels suggests that it was inserted by the major redactor. This saying was inserted according to word (CΝΔΥ, ΟΥΔ) and theme (i.e. the nature of discipleship, *Thomas* 21.1 and 22.2).

⁸³⁰ The major redactor, following the questions in *Thomas* 20.1, 21.1, and 22.2 inserts yet another question *according to form*. Because this saying betrays a shared interest with the Johannine tradition (cf. Jn 7:33-34), it is most likely that this question derives from the major redactor’s hands. (Cf. E. Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, chapter two).

⁸³¹ Given the numerous early parallels of this tradition (Q 11:34-35, Mt 5:14, the Johannine tradition, and *Dialogue of the Savior*) it seems this tradition preceded its extant form in *Thomas* 24.3. However, given the use of vocabulary common to the major redaction and the motif of light in *Thomas* 50, it seems the major redactor has inserted it here in *Thomas*. The major redactor knew this tradition and inserts it here to redirect the question posed in 24.1. This complex makes sense after the questions concerning the nature of discipleship (i.e., *Thomas* 21.1, 22.2) that precede it. Here the major redactor declares through Jesus that the disciples should not look for Jesus, but rather look within themselves -- there the light of the world exists. The major redactor inserted this saying according to the theme of ‘seeing and light.’ The insertion makes sense within the context set by the saying that follows in *Thomas* 25, which concerns the ‘pupil of the eye.’ Chreia expressed: with a change of subject.

27.1 Jesus said: “*If* you do not fast to the world (ΚΟСМОС) you will not find the kingdom.

If you do not make the Sabbath a (true) Sabbath, you will not see (ΝΑΥ) the Father.”

28. Jesus said: “I took my stand in the midst of the world (ΚΟСМОС), and I was manifested to them in flesh (CΑΡΞ). I found all of them drunk (ΤΑΞΕ) and none of them thirsting. And my soul throbbed for the sons of men for they are blind in their hearts and do not see (ΝΑΥ). For blind they came into the world empty and seek also to leave the world (ΚΟСМОС) empty. But right now they are merely drunk (ΤΟΞΕ). When they sober up, then they will turn.”

29.1 Jesus said: “*If* the flesh (CΑΡΞ) emerged from the spirit, it is a wonder (ΩΠΗΡΕ). But if the spirit emerged from the body (CΩΜΑ), that is a wonder (ΩΠΗΡΕ) of wonders (ΩΠΗΡΕ)”!

29.2 *Yet*, I wonder (ΩΠΗΡΕ) at how this great richness was placed in this poverty (ΜῆΤ ΖΗΚΕ).⁸³²

⁸³² The major redactor inserted these sayings according to word and according to theme. The structure of this elaborative scheme is illustrated below:

- 26.1 see -- ΝΑΥ
- 27.1 world -- ΚΟСМОС
- 27.2 see -- ΝΑΥ
- 28. world -- ΚΟСМОС
- 28. flesh -- CΑΡΞ.
- 28. drunk -- ΤΑΞΕ
- 28. see -- ΝΑΥ.
- 28. world -- ΚΟСМОС
- 28. drunk -- ΤΟΞΕ.
- 29.1 flesh -- CΑΡΞ
- 29.1 wonder -- ΩΠΗΡΕ
- 29.1 body -- CΩΜΑ
- 29.1 wonder -- ΩΠΗΡΕ
- 29.1 wonders -- ΩΠΗΡΕ
- 29.2 wonder -- ΩΠΗΡΕ
- 29.2 poverty -- ΜῆΤ ΖΗΚΕ

Thomas 26.1-29.2 clearly exhibits the hermeneutical interests and vocabulary of the major redactor. This particular juxtaposition of sayings suggests that the major redactor had more than one organizing and elaborative mechanism operating at once. While the word ‘see’ (ΝΑΥ) precipitated the major redactor’s insertion of *Thomas* 26 the rest of the cluster of sayings don’t necessarily hold to such a simple elaborative pattern. What begins as a verbal association morphs into a thematic association with seeing, blindness, and world. And by ‘world’ (ΚΟСМОС) the major redactor saw further connections as the world became associated with the flesh, body, and poverty. This ‘cascading’ structure (a term I borrow from discussions with Dr. Hal Taussig) is a major meaning-making and organizational strategy in the major redaction, and it is exhibited above.

<<30.1 Jesus said: "Where there are three gods, they are Gods, where there are two (CNAΥ) or one (OYA), I am with them.>>

<<30.2 Lift the stone, you will find me there. Split the piece of wood, I am there.>>⁸³³

31. Jesus said: "**No prophet is accepted in his own village. No physician heals those who know him.**"

32. Jesus said: "**They are building a city upon an elevated mountain and fortifying it! It cannot fall – but it also cannot be hidden.**"

33.1 Jesus said: "**What you hear in your ear declare with the other ear from your rooftops.**"

33.2 *For* no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does one put it in a hidden place. Rather, that one puts it on a lamp stand so that everyone who enters and leaves will see its light.

34. Jesus said: "**If a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a pit.**"

35. Jesus said: "**It is not possible for someone to enter the house of a powerful man and take it by force without binding his hands. Then he will loot his house.**"

36. Jesus said, "**Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, [about your food, about what you're going to eat, or about your clothing--] what you are going to wear.**"

36.2 [You are far] better than the lilies, which do not card nor [spin].

36.3 As for you when you have no clothes, what [will you put] on?
Who might add to your status?

36.5 *That* one will give your clothes.

37.1 His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"

37.2 Jesus said: "When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take up your clothes and put them under your feet like little

⁸³³ In the Greek fragments of *Thomas* this final saying in 30.2 was juxtaposed with *Thomas* 30.1

children, and tread on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living (ON2) One and you will not be afraid.”⁸³⁴

38. Jesus said: “Many times you longed to hear the sayings that I am telling you, and you have no other to hear them from. The days will come when you seek after me, but you will not find me.”⁸³⁵

39.1 Jesus said: “**The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge and hidden them. They do not enter nor do they permit those who desire to enter to enter.**”

39.2 *As for you*, be as cunning as snakes and as innocent as doves.

40. Jesus said: “**A grapevine has been planted outside the Father. Since it is not supported, it will be pulled up from the roots and will be destroyed.**”

41. Jesus said: “**Whoever has something in his hand, more will be given. And whoever has nothing, even the little that person has will be taken away from that person.**”

42. Jesus said: “**Be passers-by.**”

43.1 His disciples said to him: “Who are you to say these things to us?”

43.2 “You do not realize who I am from what I say to you? Rather, you have become like the Judeans: they love the tree, but hate its fruit – and love its fruit, but hate the tree.”⁸³⁶

44.1 Jesus said: “Whoever blasphemes against the father will be forgiven. And whoever blasphemes against the son will be forgiven.”

44.2 *But* whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, neither on earth (KA2) or heaven (ΠΕ).

45.1 Jesus said: “**Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs picked from thistles, for they do not bear fruit.**”

⁸³⁴ The major redactor inserted *Thomas* 37.1-2 according to theme. In *Thomas* 36.1-36.5 the theme of garments plays prominently, and in *Thomas* 37.1-2 the major redactor expands upon this theme with a dialogue about stripping off the garments of the flesh and returning to Eden. The use of ON2 further suggests that this dialogue originated with the major redactor.

⁸³⁵ Because *Thomas* 38 shares the questions of the Johannine tradition, it is more than probable that the major redactor inserted these two stitches. (Cf. E. Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, chapter two).

⁸³⁶ Given the parallels with the Johannine interests and the question of Jesus’ authority, it is most likely that this dialogue derives from the major redactor’s hand. (Cf. E. Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, chapter two).

45.2 A good person brings forth good from his storehouse, a bad person brings forth evil from his corrupt storehouse (which is in his heart) and he speaks evil. For out of abundance (of heart) he produces evil.

46.1 Jesus said: **"From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women, no one is honored more than John the Baptist, (so that) his eyes need not be averted."**

46.2 *Yet, I have also said:* "Whoever among you becomes little will know the kingdom and will be honored more than John."

47.1 Jesus said: **"It is *impossible* for a person to mount two horses and to draw two bows."**

47.2 *And* it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters, for he would honor the one and insult the other.

47.3 No one wants to drink aged wine and immediately wants to drink new wine.

47.4 *And* new wine is not poured into old wineskins, because they would burst. Nor is old wine poured into new wine skins, because it would spoil.

47.5 An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear would result.

48. Jesus said: **"If two make peace with each other in the same house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move away!' and it will move."**

49. Jesus said: "Blessed are the solitaires (MONOXOC) and chosen (ones), for you will find the kingdom, for are from it and will return there." ⁸³⁷

50.1 Jesus said: "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?'

50.2 Say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light generated itself and established itself, and has been made manifest in their image (IKWN).' If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the Living (ON2) Father.'

50.3 If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say, 'It is movement and repose (ANAYΠACIC).'" ⁸³⁸

⁸³⁷ As in *Thomas* 106, the major redactor has interpreted the 'two making peace with each other' as the 'two becoming one.' Thus, the major redactor has inserted this beatitude according to theme. The Kingdom or realm of God here is Eden, where the solitary ones are to return.

⁸³⁸ This dialogue continues the theme of Eden introduced in the preceding logion. Beyond the Edenic and Genesis narrative elements, the use of vocabulary (IKWN, ON2, ANAYΠACIC) characteristic of the major redaction justifies this attribution.

51.1 His disciples said to him: "When will the repose (ΑΝΑΥΠΑCΙC) of the dead (ΜΟΥ) take place, and when will the new world (ΚΟCΜΟC) come?"

51.2 He said to them: "That which you look for has come, but you did not recognize it."

52.1 His disciples said to him: "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and all have spoken within you."

52.2 He said to them: "You have left out the Living One (ΟΝ2) in your presence, and you spoke (only) about those who are dead (ΜΟΥ)."

53.1 His disciples said to him: "Is circumcision beneficial or not for us?" He said to them: "If it were beneficial their father would beget them circumcised from their mother."

53.2 *Rather*, true circumcision in Spirit is entirely (ΤΗΡῲ) profitable.⁸³⁹

54. Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."

55.1 Jesus said: "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot be a disciple of mine."

55.2 *And* whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and carry his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.

56. Jesus said: "Whoever has come to know the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) has found a corpse (ΠΤΩΜΑ). And whoever has found (the world as) a corpse (ΠΤΩΜΑ), the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) is not worthy of that one."⁸⁴⁰

57. Jesus said:

**The kingdom of the Father compares to a man who had good seed
His enemy came in the night
He sowed a weed amidst the good seed**

⁸³⁹ Logia 49-53.2 betray both the interests and characteristic vocabulary of the major redaction. They evince an engagement with the questions shared with the Johannine community and an interest in Edenic motifs. They are organized according to theme.

⁸⁴⁰ The major redactor inserted this saying according to theme. For the major redactor, there is a hermeneutical association between 'hating' blood relations and 'overcoming the world' by recognizing it as a dead corpse. Additionally, the use of vocabulary (ΚΟCΜΟC, ΠΤΩΜΑ) common to the major redaction further suggests that the major redactor's hand is at work here.

**The man did not permit them to pull up the weed
He said to them: 'When you go to pull up the weed you may also pull up the good seed**

**On the day of the harvest the weeds will be visible
(Then) they pull them up and burn them.'**

58. Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who is disturbed (by his discovery), he has found life (ΩΝ2)." ⁸⁴¹

59. Jesus said: "Look after the Living (ΟΝ2) One while you are living (ΟΝ2), lest you die (ΜΟΥ) and (then) seek to see that one. You will not find the power to behold."

60. <He saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on the way to Judea. He said to his disciples: "He is surrounding the lamb."
They said to him: "He does so in order to kill and eat (ΟΥΟΜ) it."
He said to them: "While it is living (ΟΝ2) he will not eat (ΟΥΟΜ) it. Rather, If he kills it then it will become a corpse (ΠΤΩΜΑ) (and then he can eat it)."
They said to him: "There is no other way."
He said to them: "*You also*, seek after a place of repose (ΑΝΔΥΠΑCΙC), lest you become corpses (ΠΤΩΜΑ) and get consumed." ⁸⁴²

61.1 Jesus said: "Two will recline on a couch – one will die, another other will live!"

61.2 Salome said: "Who are you (to say such things) while you recline upon my couch and eat from my table?"
Jesus said to her: "I derive from the One who is equal (to all). I was (merely) given (by you) that which is my Father's."
"I am your disciple."
61.3 *Because of this, I say:* "When a person becomes <equal> that person will be full of light."

⁸⁴¹ The major redactor inserted this beatitude according to theme. For the major redactor, the stunning realization of the weeds by the rich man was elaborated in such a way that equated this realization with the disciple who is 'disturbed' by his discovery. In the context of the major redactional material, that which the disciple discovers is the initial image of God within the human person. This saying is also closely related to *Thomas* 2.2: "And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed (ΩΠΗΡΕ), and he will rule-as-a-king over (the) all (ΤΗΡΕ)."

⁸⁴² *Thomas* 59 and 60.1-2 represent an elaboration according to word (ΩΝ2, ΟΝ2). Both the dialogue and saying reflect the interests and vocabulary of the major redaction. The final stitch in 60.2 represents a hermeneutical variation on *Thomas* 76.2: "You also, seek after his treasure which does not perish, but endures – where neither moth approaches to eat it nor worm destroys."

62.1 Jesus said: "I tell my mysteries to those who are worthy of my mysteries."

63.1 Jesus said:

**There was a rich man who had an abundance of money
He said: 'I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, and plant
And fill my storehouse
So that I lack nothing'
Such were his intentions, but that very night he died!**

63.2 Whoever has ears, hear!

64.1 Jesus said:

**A man had guests.
When he had prepared the dinner, he sent his slave to invite the guests
He came to the first person
He said: 'My master invites you'
He responded: 'I have money for some merchants who are
coming to me this evening and I must place my orders. I
cannot attend the dinner.'
He went to another person
He said: 'My master invites you'
He responded: 'I just bought a house and am required for the
day. I cannot attend.'
He went to another person
He said: 'My master invites you'
He responded: 'My friend is getting married, and I am in
charge of preparing the meal. I cannot attend the dinner.'
He went to another person
He said: 'My master invites you'
He responded: 'I have purchased a field and am going to
collect the rent. I cannot come. Please excuse me.'
The slave left.
He said to his master: 'The people you invited to the dinner have
asked to be excused.'
The master said to his slave: 'Go outside on the streets. Whoever you find,
bring them in so that they may dine.'**

64.2 Usurers and merchants will not enter the places of my Father.

65.1 Jesus said:

**A usurer owned a vineyard.
He leased it to some tenants so that they would work it and he take
the fruit from their hands.
He sent his slave to collect the fruit of the vineyard.
They seized his slave. They beat him, almost to the
point of death.**

The slave went back to his master and told him (about what had happened).

His master said: 'Perhaps he (the slave) did not know them (the tenants).'

He sent another slave.

The tenants beat that one as well.

Then the master sent his son.

He said: 'Perhaps they will be shamed before my son.'

The tenants, since they knew he was the heir to the vineyard, seized him and killed him.

65.2 Whoever has ears, hear!

66. Jesus said: "Show me the stone that the builders rejected – *that* one is the cornerstone."

67. Jesus said: "Whoever knows the all (THPḳ), if he (still) needs himself, he (still) needs (the) all (THPḳ)." ⁸⁴³

68.1 Jesus said: "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted."

68.2 *For* they will find no place where they persecuted you within.

69.1 Jesus said: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted within their hearts. They are the ones who have truly known the Father."

69.2 Blessed are those who are hungry, for they are motivated to alleviate the belly of the one who desires.

70. Jesus said: "When you birth the one within you, that one will save you. If you do not have that one within you, that one will kill you." ⁸⁴⁴

71. Jesus said: "I will destroy this house and no one will be able to rebuild it."

⁸⁴³ This saying reflects both the major redactor's hermeneutical interests (i.e. knowledge of self and 'the all') and vocabulary (i.e. THPḳ). The major redactor has inserted this saying as an elaboration of *Thomas* 66. Just as 'the stone that has been rejected is the cornerstone,' so also the 'one that does not know himself' makes the 'true self' rejected like the cornerstone. This is an elaboration according to theme.

⁸⁴⁴ The 'belly' and what is or is not within it was elaborated by the major redactor according to the theme of 'giving birth to the one within.' This elaborative accretion makes sense within the context set by 69.2. Here 70 serves to hermeneutically frame the 'house' in 71 as the body/flesh that 'houses' the spirit: "If the flesh emerged from the spirit, it is a wonder. But if the spirit emerged from the body, that is a wonder of wonders"! Yet, I wonder at how this great richness was placed in this poverty" (*Thomas* 29).

72. A man said to Jesus: "Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me."

He said to him: "Oh sir, who has made me a divider?"

He turned to his disciples and said: "I am not a divider am I?"

73. Jesus said: "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord that he might send forth laborers to the harvest."

74. Jesus said: "Lord there are many around the well, but there is nothing in it."

75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but only the solitaires (MONOXOC) are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber." ⁸⁴⁵

76.1 Jesus said:

The realm of the Father is compared to a merchant who had some merchandise

He found a pearl

That merchant was wise

He sold the merchandise

Then he purchased the pearl for *himself alone*.

76.2 *You also*, seek after his treasure which does not perish, but endures – where neither moth approaches to eat it nor worm destroys.

77.1 Jesus said: "I am the light which is above them all (THPQ), I am the all (THPQ). (The) all (THPQ) has come forth from me, and (the) all (THPQ) has split open before me."

<<77.2 // 30.3 Lift the stone, you will find me there. Split the piece of wood, I am there.>> ⁸⁴⁶

78. Jesus said: "Why have you come out to the field? To see a reed shaken by the wind and to see someone dressed in soft clothes [like your kings] and powerful men? They are dressed in soft clothes, but they don't know the truth."

⁸⁴⁵ The major redactor inserted this saying according to theme, structure, and word. Both *Thomas* 74 and 75 deal with something that is expansive but only available to those seeking or entering in the correct manner. The use of the term MONOXOC suggests that this saying was inserted by the major redactor. Both *Thomas* 74 and 75 make use of a two-stitch *structure*, as well as the word 2Δ2, 'many.' 73 also shares this *theme* of abundance: NΔΩΩ, 'plentiful.'

⁸⁴⁶ In the Coptic version of the *Gospel of Thomas* this saying follows 77.1 *according to theme* and *according to word* (i.e. ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ / ΔΝΟΚ †ΜΔΥ, 'I am' / 'I am there.' Thematically the saying completes the cosmic presence of Jesus in 77.1. It also works as a *hermeneutical framing* of 78, which takes place in a field, where one would presumably find stones and trees. In this sense the question in 78 -- "Why have you come out to the field" -- is a response to the saying 77.2 because Jesus just said he could be found in nature, which the field may represent.

79.1 A woman in the crowd said to him: “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you.”

He said to her: “Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it.”

79.2 For there will be days when you will say: ‘Blessed is the womb that has not conceived, and the breasts which have not given milk.’

80. Jesus said: Whoever has known the world (ΚΟСМОС) has found the body (СΩΜΑ). And whoever has found the body (СΩΜΑ), the world (ΚΟСМОС) is no longer worthy of that person.⁸⁴⁷

81. Jesus said: “Whoever has grown rich should rule (ῥῥο). But whoever has power should renounce.”⁸⁴⁸

82. Jesus said: “Whoever is near me is near the fire (ΚΩ2Τ), and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom.”

83. Jesus said: “The images (ΙΚΩΝ) are manifested to humanity, and the light within them is hidden in the image (ΙΚΩΝ) of the Father’s light. He will be made manifest but his image (ΙΚΩΝ) is hidden away in his light.”

84. Jesus said: “In the days when you would look at your resemblance you rejoiced. When, however, you look upon the images (ΙΚΩΝ) that came into being upon your emergence, which neither die (ΜΟΥ) nor manifest themselves, how much you will have to bear!”

85. Jesus said: “Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth. But he was not worthy of you. For, if he had been worthy (of you) [he would] not [have tasted] death (ΜΟΥ).”⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁷ The major redactor inserted this saying *according to theme*. Following the oracle of judgment in 79.1, the major redactor adds a saying about being superior to a decaying world.

⁸⁴⁸ This saying has affinities with *Thomas* 2.2: “And when he finds we will be disturbed, and once he is disturbed he will become awed (ὤπηρε), and he will rule-as-a-king (ῥῥο) over (the) all (ΤΗΡΑ),” which suggests that it derives from the major redactor. Because 81 follows 80 according to theme it appears that the major redactor associates ‘ruling’ with being ‘superior to the world’ (i.e. ‘finding the world’). *Thomas* 81 also parallels 82’s two stitch structure and relational opening.

⁸⁴⁹ *Thomas* 83-85 are organized in the major redaction according to theme. Each appeal to the condition of Edenic existence and use vocabulary characteristic of the major redaction. *Thomas* 83 and 84 are also organized *according to word* (i.e. ΙΚΩΝ, ‘image’). Why 83-85 follow 82 remains speculative at best. *Thomas* 85, however, may have been inserted also as a means of *hermeneutically framing* the next logion in 86 (seems to be missing words) connection perhaps between ‘Adam’ and the ‘son of man’ (a circumlocution for ‘Adam’ in Semitic languages).

86. Jesus said: "[The foxes have] their dens and the birds have their nests, but the son of man has no place to lay down his head and rest (ḲTON)."

87. Jesus said: "Damn the body (CΩMΔ) that depends on a body (CΩMΔ); and damn to the soul that depends on these two."⁸⁵⁰

88. Jesus said: "The messengers and the prophets will come to you. They will give you what is yours and you will give them what you have. *You will say to yourselves*: 'When will they come and take what is theirs?'"

89. Jesus said: "Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not understand that the one who created the inside is also the one that created the outside?"

90.1 Jesus said: "Come to me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is gentle.
<<90.2 And you will find [rest] (ḲTON) for yourselves.">>

90.2 And you will find repose (ΔΝΔΥΠΔCIC) for yourselves.⁸⁵¹

91.1 They said to him: "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you."

91.2 "But, that which you asked me about in those days I did not tell you, but I now desire to tell you, but you no longer seek (to know)."

92.1 Jesus said: "Seek and you will find."

91.2 He said to them: "You read the face of the sky (ΠΕ) and the earth (ΚΔ2), but you do not know the one who is before you, nor do you know how to read this moment."

93. Jesus said: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, for they might toss them to the dung pile. Do not toss pearls to pigs, for they might [trample them]."

⁸⁵⁰ Within the context of the major redactor's hermeneutical frame of reference, it appears that the homeless condition of the 'son of man' is equated with the poverty of the body in 87. Thus 87 is an elaboration of 86 according to theme. The major redactor has also used 87 to hermeneutically frame 88's reference to what will be given to the messengers and prophets. In the context of the major redaction, 88 refers to the fleshly garment that is associated with 'poverty' in other parts of the text.

⁸⁵¹ The major redactor, it seems, replaced 'rest' -- which is used in the Matthean form -- with ΔΝΔΥΠΔCIC, 'repose.' This, again, exhibits the major redactor's interest in focusing on the present moment rather than the future resurrection. If the earlier form used something akin to (ḲTON) then there would be an organizational principle according to word with 86.

94. Jesus said: "Whoever seeks will find. [Whoever knocks] they will open to that one."

95. Jesus said: "If you have money, do not lend it at interest. Rather, lend it to someone who wont pay you back."

96. Jesus said:

The kingdom of the Father is compared to a woman (C21ME)
She took a little yeast and hid it in dough
She made the loaves into leavened bread!

96.2 Whoever has ears, hear!

97. Jesus said:

The kingdom of the Father is compared to a woman (C21ME) carrying a
[jar] filled with meal.
While she was walking on the road a ways out, the handle of the jar
broke.
The meal emptied out along the road, but she did not realize it or recognize
a problem.

98. Jesus said:

The kingdom of the Father is compared to someone who wanted to kill a
powerful man.
He drew his sword in his house
He stabbed the wall in order to see whether his hand might (have the
stomach to) hold steady
Then he slew the powerful man.

99. The disciples said to him: "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."
He said to them: "Those who do the will of my Father, they are my brothers and my
mother. They are (truly) the ones who enter the kingdom of my Father."

100.1 They showed Jesus a coin and said to him: "Caesar's people demand taxes from
us."He said to them: "Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, (but) give God what is God's."

100.2 And give me what is mine.

101.1 Jesus said: "Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother in the same way I
do, cannot be a [disciple] of mine."

101.2 And whoever does not love his father and his mother in the same way I do,
cannot be a disciple of mine.

101.3 *For* my mother [birthed my body], but my true [mother] gave me life (ΩΝ2). ⁸⁵²

103. Jesus said: "Blessed is the one who knows where the thieves are going to enter, so that [he] might arise and assemble his estate-(kingdom), and prepare himself."

104. They said to Jesus: "Come, today let us pray and fast." Jesus said: "What sin have I committed, or where have I been defeated?"

105. Jesus said: "Whoever knows mother and father will be called the child of a whore!" ⁸⁵³

106. Jesus said: "When you make the two one (CΝΔΥ ΟΥΔ), you will become children of (the) Man. And if you say: 'Mountain move away!' It will move." ⁸⁵⁴

107. Jesus said:

The kingdom compares to a shepherd who had a hundred sheep
One of them, the *largest*, went astray
He left the (other) ninety-nine
He sought after that one until he found it
After such an effort, he said to the sheep:
'I love you *more* than the (other) ninety-nine.'

108. Jesus said: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become that person, and what is hidden will be revealed to that person." ⁸⁵⁵

109.1 Jesus said:

The kingdom compares to a man who had in his field a hidden treasure,

⁸⁵² The major redactor added a rationale for the opposition between the two aphorisms that precede it. By my speculative emendation, the two stitches in *Thomas* 101.3 adhere to the interests of the major redactor. In *Thomas* 101.3, then, one can find the basic opposition in the hermeneutical framework of the major redaction: body/flesh vs. Life.

⁸⁵³ The major redactor has inserted this saying according to theme. For the major redactor there is a connection between 'sin' and 'sexual reproduction.' This is related to the problem of having left Eden with the male and female being separated. Here in *Thomas* 106 they are exhorted to become one again as in the first image of God that was *both* male *and* female.

⁸⁵⁴ The major redactor here in 106 has inserted a solution to the problem presented in 105. The solution is for the mother and father -- that is, the male and the female -- to become one.

⁸⁵⁵ The major redactor has inserted this saying after the Parable of the Shepherd in 107 according to theme. In the final stitch of the parable the shepherd (who is not Jesus in the formative stratum) declares: "I love you *more* than the (other) ninety-nine." Because the major redactor interprets this final stitch as Jesus' words to his disciples, he inserted *Thomas* 108.

but he was unaware of it.
And [after] his death, he left it to his son
The son was also unaware (of the treasure)
He took the field and sold [it]
The one who bought the field went plowing and found the treasure.

109.2 He began to lend money at interest to those he loved.

110. Jesus said: "Whoever has found the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) and become rich should renounce the world (ΚΟCΜΟC)." ⁸⁵⁶

111.1 Jesus said: "The heavens (ΠΕ) and earth (ΚΑ2) will be rolled up (right) before you."

111.2 *And* the one who lives (ΟΝ2) from the Living (ΟΝ2) One will not see death (ΜΟΥ).⁸⁵⁷

111.3 *Does not Jesus say:* 'Whoever has found oneself, the world (ΚΟCΜΟC) is not worthy of that person.'⁸⁵⁸

112. Jesus said: "Damn the flesh (CΑΡΞ) that depends on the soul, and damn the soul that depends on the flesh (CΑΡΞ)."⁸⁵⁹

113.1 His disciples said to Jesus: "When will the kingdom come?"

113.2 "It will not come by looking for it. It will not be a matter of saying, 'Here it is!' or 'Look! There it is.'"

113.3 Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, but people don't see it."

114.1 Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary leave us for women do not deserve (the) Life (ΩΝ2)."

⁸⁵⁶ The major redactor has inserted this saying according to theme. In the major redactor's hermeneutical apparatus, being 'rich' is associated with 'ruling over the world' as Adam was initially intended to -- this is clearly expressed in *Thomas* 110.

⁸⁵⁷ The major redactor has elaborated the initial clause in *Thomas* 111.1 by reorienting its apocalyptic tenor. In the major redaction there is only the 'present moment.'

⁸⁵⁸ The rationale for the elaboration in *Thomas* 111.2 is offered here in this clause. Though the world is being rolled up in front of the initiate, he should have nothing to fear, for he has 'found himself, and thus as in *Thomas* 2.2 'rules over the world.' This, according to the major redactor, is why the world will be 'rolled up before the reader.'

⁸⁵⁹ The major redactor here once again associates 'ruling over the world' with 'ruling over the body.'

114.2 Jesus said: "Look! I will lead her so that I might make her male, which will make her into a living (ON2) spirit resembling you males."

114.3 *For* any woman that makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.⁸⁶⁰

Conclusion

This Appendix, I believe, has succeeded in both recovering a list of the major redactional sayings and demonstrating that the rest of the material in the *Gospel of Thomas* can exist sensibly without the major redaction. The illustration of the major redactional material in conversation with the other material above also shows definitively that the major redactional material was *dependent* on earlier material within the *Thomas* tradition. What still remains is a detailed analysis of its thematic context and coherence as well as its relationship to later Syrian and Thomasine literature. This is the task of the chapter three.

⁸⁶⁰ The dialogue complex at the end of the *Gospel of Thomas* suggests that the position of women within the Thomasine group had come into question when the major redaction was being applied. This saying appeals to the Edenic state described in *Thomas* 22.2-3 and exposes Peter's question as wrong-headed. In the major redaction, as outlined in chapter three, the initial image of God, though *both male and female*, was by ancient standards, it seems, considered to be by default 'male.' Mary and women, however, are exhorted to enter the Kingdom of Heaven -- not to 'give up.' This saying parodies Peter's position, it does not advocate it.

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